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“Pluto pulled one down, and Walter shot the savage with his revolver.”—
Page 276. [Front.

THE
BLACK PANTHER

OR

A Boy's Adventures among the Redskins.

BY

SIR C. F. LASCELLES WRAXALL, BART.,
AUTHOR OF "PIPE AND DRUM, OR, HE WOULD BE A SOLDIER," ETC.

With Illustrations by Louis Spauld, engraved by Edmund Evans.

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PREFACE.



As objections might be raised as to the "local colour" of the following story, from the fact of the writer never having been further west than Killarney, he thinks it necessary to state that the sporting adventures and Indian incidents have been freely adapted from a work by a German author, who lived for upwards of sixteen years on the "dark and bloody ground," and, somewhat to his surprise, brought his scalp back to Europe.

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THE BLACK PANTHER;

OR,

A BOY'S ADVENTURES AMONG THE REDSKINS.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE.—THE OZIERs.—THE FARMER'S FAMILY.—
WALTER ARDEN.—A TRULY HAPPY LIFE.—A SUDDEN MISFORTUNE.—
—NOTICE TO QUIT.—TAYLOR APPEALS IN VAIN.—THE CALUMNY.—
FALSE FRIENDS.—THE LAWYER'S ADVICE.—THE GOSSIP OF A
COUNTRY TOWN.—PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE.

IN the pleasant vale of White Horse there lived a family of the name of Taylor, consisting of father and mother, a daughter, and two sons. Mr. Taylor was a farmer, and rented a small farm called the Oziers, from one of the old county families. His great-grandfather had held the farm in his day. The lease had always been handed down from father to son, and in this way Mr. Henry Taylor became possessed of it. The Oziers had been for upwards of one hundred years in the hands of the Taylor family, and hence he had grown to regard it as his own property. There had never been any talk of removing him, and when the value of land rose so remarkably after 1847 in

The Black Panther ; or,

England, Mr. Taylor willingly assented to pay an increased rent.

- The Oziers lay at the foot of Whitehorse Hill, in a pleasant little valley watered by a stream. The Taylors had never been able to lay by much money, for the farm was too small for that ; still they had ever paid their rent regularly, lived without any great anxiety, always given their family an excellent education, and at the same time had saved up a trifle for a rainy day. This example Mr. Henry Taylor had closely followed ; he had a small sum out at mortgage, lived contentedly, and did all in his power to let his children learn as much as they could, for he was of opinion that a good education was worth more than any fortune. " A person who possesses book learning," he would often say, " carries a capital about with him which supports him under every circumstance of life, and which nobody can take from him."

Amy, a girl of fourteen, was the eldest child ; next came Freddy, eleven years of age ; and Charles, the second son, was rising nine. There was also a boy in the family who was counted as a member of it, and whose name was Walter Arden. His mother, Mr. Taylor's sister, had been married to a Dr. Arden ; both his parents had died a few years back, and the orphaned Walter was received into his uncle's family, and regarded and treated as a son. Walter was just over fourteen years of age, and a boy of remarkable physical and mental qualities. He was a handsome, strongly built, healthy lad, with curly brown hair, large blue sparkling eyes, and an open, honest, nobly-formed face. Quick and active in his movements, he was equally

decided in acting, and revealed in everything he did a heart full of affection, friendship, and gratitude. He was most fondly attached to his uncle's children, whom he called sister and brothers, and his schoolmates could trust to him unhesitatingly on every occasion. But his grateful respect and childish hearty love for his foster parents was unbounded, and he seemed to read their thoughts in order to anticipate their wishes.

Mr. Taylor was an earnest, sensible man, not quite forty years of age; he was tall and powerfully built, had dark hair, black, eloquent eyes, and his lofty forehead revealed the thinker. His wife May, on the contrary, was a plump, fair little body, with such pleasant, sparkling hazel eyes, that anybody who saw her felt at once kindly disposed towards her. She was none of your fine ladies who sit with their hands on their lap, and it was easy to see that she only lived for her family and her household. She was hard at work from morning till night, and as her daughter Amy had left school just before, she was expected to take pattern by mamma.

Amy promised to grow into the image of her mother. She had the same light hair and eyes, and there was the same pleasantness in her manner. Her brother Fred, with his black hair and dark eyes, took after his father, while Charley, the youngest, followed his mother. True happiness and a real blessing rested over this family; the parents watched with unbounded love and indefatigable care over the welfare of the children, and the latter were attached to their parents with equal love and gratitude. Confidence and union bound them closely together, and no

sacrifice was too great for them, if they could oblige one another, or procure mutual joy. They were all religiously brought up, and with thankful hearts joined in thanking the Giver of all good for the happiness He had so constantly bestowed on them. Sorrow and care were strangers to them ; they had everything their modest wants demanded, and undisturbed health allowed them to enjoy in its fullest extent every pleasure which their simple mode of life offered them.

Hospitality had ever been the rule at the Oziers, and the present tenants were known far and wide to give a hearty welcome to strangers. Poor people always found work there, and Mr. Taylor frequently gave them employment, though their services were of but slight use to him ; and the sick and aged never called at the house without receiving support, attention, and consolation. The friends, however, who took advantage of this hospitable reception were almost innumerable ; hardly a day elapsed without some of them turning up at the Oziers, and it was a rarity for the family to be without guests either at the dinner, tea, or supper table. Mrs. Taylor made no change in her domestic arrangements on their account, they were heartily welcome, and must take pot luck. Everything offered them, however, was in abundance and good ; indeed, people used to say, better than anywhere else. The walk to the Oziers from the neighbouring town was not a very long one. The road was dry and level, and the country picturesque. The farm itself was charmingly situated, and its gardens were renowned not alone for their splendid flowers, but also for their exquisite fruit. Little

did Mr. Taylor foresee that the serpent was so shortly about to creep into his paradise.

One morning the family rose at their usual early hour. Mr. Taylor rode off to have a look at his crops, while his wife and Amy were busily looking after the milking and churning. The boys had gone to fish in the stream, and brought back with them a famous basket of perch, which they carried triumphantly into the kitchen. Then Walter went off with his two half-brothers to meet Mr. Taylor, for they knew exactly by which road he would return. Their favourite dog Pluto must of course accompany them, and with merry shouts they dashed through the dew-laden grass to strike the bridle-road at the other end of the meadow. They had scarce reached it, ere the father came trotting up, and took Charley on the saddle before him.

Soon after, Amy entered her father's study to summon him to breakfast, at which meal the family speedily assembled; for all had been out in the open air for some hours, and had famous appetites. When, after the usual blessing, the bacon and bread and butter had been handed round, and Amy poured out the coffee, Mr. Taylor began speaking about the splendid prospects for the coming harvest.

"All looks unusually well and fruitful, and if the weather remain equally favourable, we shall have an extraordinarily productive harvest. The Oziers is and will ever be a gold mine, and——"

At this moment the housemaid came in with a letter, and stated that it had been brought by a messenger from Messrs. Fleecehall, the solicitors and agents of the squire.

"Tell him to wait, as there may be an answer to send back," Taylor said to the girl, as he rose and opened the letter.

"No, sir, he has left, and said there was no answer to wait for," the girl replied, and quitted the room, while Taylor, with the words, "What can they want?" walked to the window and unfolded the letter.

Mrs. Taylor had watched her husband, she hardly knew why; he suddenly turned pale, the letter trembled in his hand, he read it through once more, then folded it and placed it in his breast pocket. At this moment his eyes met those of his wife, which seemed to be anxiously questioning him.

He said nothing, and his wife asked no question; but there was a silence as if a ghost had entered the room and frozen the words on their lips. After a little while Taylor rose and left the room.

Walter had leapt up, and wished to follow his uncle, but Mrs. Taylor restrained him with the words, "Go into the garden with Charley and Fred, for father is busy now."

Then she sent Amy away too, and remained alone in the room.

With a dread feeling of anxiety she stood for some minutes, undecided as to what she should do. Something serious, something terrible had happened—that her husband's look had told her—but what could it be? what in the world was there, the loss of which could produce such a tremendous effect upon Taylor? She must know it—she must share the misfortune with her husband, for had she not shared so much happiness with him?

She hastily glided out of the room along the long passage to her husband's study, and softly opened the door. Taylor was sitting in the easy-chair, with his elbows on his knees, his head buried in his hands, and the letter lay on the ground before him. He had not heard his wife enter the room and walk up to his chair. She softly bent down to him, laid her arm on his shoulder and aroused him from his stupor. For a moment he gazed in the tear-swollen eyes of his beloved companion, and then said in a hollow voice, "May, fortune has turned fickle to us, we must leave the Oziers this autumn."

"Good heavens! why?" Mrs. Taylor asked in a trembling voice, and pressing her clasped hands to her bosom.

"The young squire, it appears, has been living too fast, betting on horse races, and so on, and his creditors have seized the estate. They cannot sell it, as it is strictly entailed, but are going to manage the property themselves. The new bailiff has chosen the Oziers for his residence, and our lease is out at that time."

"They cannot possibly act in such a way; surely they will not turn us out before we have obtained another farm," said Mrs. Taylor, hoping for consolation.

"They can do so, May, and will do it."

"It would be perfectly barbarous. The farm has been held by your family for above one hundred years. You willingly paid the increased rent, and brought the farm into such a state as it was never in before; it would be unjust, sinful indeed, to treat us in such a way," Mrs. Taylor continued, and tried to appear calm, while the tears coursed down her cheeks.

"And yet it will be so," Taylor replied ; "they write ~~that~~ no alteration in the decision will be made. We shall be placed in a desperate position. We have not much money. If we are obliged to sell our stock, we shall lose heavily by it ; and then, where can we find another farm so easily ? There is no second Oziers for us : the gold tree has produced its last fruit. Fortune is about to turn her back on us, May."

"God has never deserted us, Henry, and He will not do so now ! We can be quite as happy on another farm, even if we have to draw in a little," Mrs. Taylor remarked, while wiping away her tears unnoticed.

"Another farm ! that is easily said ; but suppose we had not the means," Taylor urged, looking down on the ground.

"Henry, we have many wealthy and kind friends," the wife said again, as she seized her husband's hand, and looked up in his face, as if to comfort him.

"You are right, May," Taylor said, after a short silence. "I did not think of them ; if it be necessary, they will readily help us, as they know they have to do with honest people. I will ride over to the agents after dinner, at any rate, and try to induce them to let me keep the Oziers on for at least one year longer. In that time I can look round for another farm, and make my arrangements to leave. Surely the people must be reasonable."

After saying this, Taylor, breathing more freely, took up the letter, and laid it on the table, while his wife passed her arm through his, and walked up and down the room with him.

"All last year I urgently begged for the renewal of my lease, but it was constantly put off; and, indeed, I hardly thought it necessary to have any agreement, as the Oziers had remained so long in my family. Who could have thought of such a thing!"

"Men can take the Oziers from us, Henry, but not our happiness—that we will carry with us wherever we go, if our health is only left us. We are used to work, and like it. Just speak to the agents, and try to make them act fairly. In any case, the Oziers is not the only farm in the world, though we should miss our pleasant vale for a long time," Mrs. Taylor observed; and the hearts of the couple, now threatened with misfortune for the first time in their life, gradually grew easier through the consolatory words they interchanged.

Mrs. Taylor left her husband in a much calmer frame of mind than when she first found him. The children, too, grew pacified when they saw their parents appear at dinner, quite calm, though a little more serious than usual. Walter brought his uncle's horse to the front door, Mr. Taylor leapt on its back, and gave his wife his hand in parting, with the words, "Heaven will help us!"

"I feel certain of that," Mrs. Taylor replied, with the most perfect conviction, and waved her hand in farewell.

The ride was taken to no purpose, for Taylor, on his return, brought the news that all his representations and entreaties were in vain, and that the creditors adhered to their resolution that he must leave the farm in the ensuing autumn.

The news of this resolution soon spread, and various

conjectures were formed as to the motive for this severity. Some one at length remarked confidentially that money matters were very queer with Taylor. But although these reports passed from mouth to mouth, they had not yet reached the Oziers, and many a week elapsed ere the Taylors heard anything from the town except the gossip the boys brought back at night, when returning from the grammar-school.

"It is extraordinary to me that we have seen none of our friends," Taylor said one evening, when the family were cosily sitting under the walnut-tree on the lawn. "I will ride into town to-morrow, and hear what our acquaintances say. They will surely take the deepest interest in our welfare. Perhaps one or the other of them may know of a farm to be let. In any case I shall be glad of a friend's advice."

The following day, then, Taylor mounted his horse directly after dinner to ride to the town, and his wife cried after him, "Mind and remember me kindly to them all."

After putting up his horse at the inn, Mr. Taylor proceeded first to the house of Mr. Copeland, the solicitor of half the county.

The lawyer, whom Taylor regarded as one of his warmest friends, received him with great politeness, but did not call him as of yore, "My dear friend," but only "Mr. Taylor." He led him along the passage toward the drawing-room, saying, "The ladies will be delighted to see you."

But Taylor restrained him with the words, "I should like to speak to you alone for a few minutes, for there is an important matter in which I want your advice."

"Certainly, certainly; I am quite at your service. I

suppose it's some law-suit. Has anybody been cheating you, or going to do so? Well, you can reckon on my help. Kindly tell me what I can do for you," the solicitor replied, as he led Taylor to his private room, and sat down by his side.

"You have often praised my good fortune, Mr. Cope-land, but it is beginning to desert me," the farmer said, after a short pause.

"How so? You alarm me," the lawyer said, with a forced expression of surprise, in order not to betray to Taylor that he was already acquainted with his misfortune.

"Only think! I have received notice to give up possession of the Oziers in autumn," Taylor said, in a trembling voice.

"Impossible! What is the reason?"

Taylor explained it in a few words.

"That is terrible. Won't they give you time to look round for another farm? People cannot be turned out so hurriedly as that. The law will interpose in your behalf. Have you your lease with you?"

"It was to have been renewed last year, and I often begged it to be done; but I was put off from one month to the other, and it has not been signed up to the present day. The lease expires this autumn, and by my old agreement I have no legal claim to its renewal. Do not call it carelessness that I did not press more closely for the renewal. The farm has been so long in our family, that I regarded the written agreement merely as a form, which could be arranged at any moment. How could I suppose

that the delay on the part of the squire would lead to such results?" Taylor said with a deep breath.

"Yes, yes, my dear Mr. Taylor; do not be angry with me; but, at the least, you were to blame for your careless trust in the honesty of other people: such blind confidence ought not to be shown at the present day. When it is a matter of *meum* and *tuum*, I regard every man as a rogue, and then I know I shall not be taken in," the lawyer replied with marked emphasis.

"I could not be persuaded to do so, Mr. Copeland; and for my part, I would sooner be cheated now and then than give up my belief in the honesty of my neighbour, and only see a rogue in him. Thank heaven, I feel convinced that I still possess many honest friends who will not regard me as a swindler, even if there were a matter of money between us," Taylor said, with more than his usual impetuosity.

"Quite right, I am perfectly of your opinion; but friendship and business are two perfectly different things. Where personal interest pleads, friendship must give way. Now, tell me, would you like me to interfere in this matter? I will shun no trouble, if I can do anything for you, and my advice is always at your service."

"I am thankful to you for the willingness you display to help me, but must decline it, as I have myself made the attempt to no purpose. They will not listen to any alteration in their resolution," Taylor replied, offended by the principles of a man whom he had ever regarded as a sincere friend.


The conversation grew more abrupt and forced, and

soon after Taylor rose to take leave. Mr. Copeland made no attempt to keep him, and said, with a polite bow, as he accompanied him to the front door, "My advice is always at your service, Mr. Taylor."

The latter replied by a silent nod, and hurried along the street with a painfully contracted heart. Mr. Copeland had been the very man from whom he had expected the warmest sympathy; and now, what feelings, what principles had this man expressed toward him!

Undetermined whether to ride straight home, or look up his other friends, Taylor walked slowly along the street, occupied with bitter thoughts. The feeling forced itself irresistibly upon him that he would everywhere learn the same rough experience as from Mr. Copeland, even though his heart protested against it, and clung to the belief in really true friendship. At the corner where the streets divided, he stopped for a moment hesitating, but then walked to the inn, resolved to wait and see what sympathy his friends offered him, without being asked for it; for the news of his misfortune must already have spread through the little town.

Mrs. Taylor, directly after her husband's departure, had turned to household duties, in the hope of distracting her thoughts, and diverting them from the heavy blow which had assailed their hitherto unclouded happiness. But whatever she might undertake, she found rest nowhere, and with every hour her desire for her husband's return increased. Again and again she went to the sitting-room, from whose windows she could see a long way down the road, in the hope of greeting her husband.



When the sun had set, she seated herself at the window, and kept her eyes fixed on the furthest visible point of the road. At length she recognized her returning husband ; but he was not coming as usual, at a sharp trot, he was walking his horse, and she thought that he had never ridden home so slowly before. She could not wait for him in the house, so threw a shawl over her head, and hurried out to meet him.

"You bring no good news with you, Henry," she said, as she met him on the road, and offered him her hand.

"No, May ; we have been greatly mistaken in our friends, and above all in Copeland. The news that we must leave the Oziers seemed to arouse his fears rather than his sympathy, and instead of warm, hearty cheering words, I only received from him cold, unmeaning advice and stiff politeness. He was a friend in good fortune, but no friend in need," Taylor replied, as he dismounted, led his horse, and walked homewards arm in arm with his wife.

"Mr. Copeland ?" Mrs. Taylor said in surprise ; "and yet he was always so kind and attentive to us."

"Yes, he reproached me, and advised me, in all business matters, to regard men as rogues, as he did, and then I should not be cheated."

"Heaven defend you from such a faith, Henry. Sooner let them cheat us. No, there are still good people left, and we shall learn to know them in our trouble. What did the Barkers say ?"

"I did not call on them, for I felt I could not expose myself to such another disappointment. We will wait till

our friends bring us comfort, for I will not try to obtain it from them. I went from Copeland's back to the inn. I found several farmers there who treated me most kindly. They were very angry, used rather strong language against the squire, and finally declared that I must not leave the county on any consideration. They would do their best to procure me some farm near at hand, because I had always assisted the poor and needy. Really, May, that did me good, and compensated me a thousand-fold for the loss of our seeming friend."

"And we shall not require their assistance, if the one true and merciful Friend, who has till now so paternally aided us, deigns to accord us His grace in future," Mrs. Taylor said, looking up to heaven.

"Yes, May, God has ever been our most faithful Friend, and we will firmly trust in His helping hand. What appears to us at the moment a misfortune, will certainly turn to our profit; but let it be welcome, whatever form it may assume."

With these words Taylor laid his hand in his wife's, as if they wished to give each other a promise never to yield or falter in their faith.

The next morning Taylor drew up several advertisements, stating his wish to rent a farm, and also wrote a number of letters to distant friends, asking them to exert themselves on his behalf, and let him know if they heard of any farm to let. He hurriedly carried the letters to the post, but was constantly stopped in the street by the inhabitants, as every one wished to hear from his own lips whether the report of his giving up the Oziers was correct.

There was only one opinion among them all, anger with the squire, and the warmest sympathy for Taylor. Still, he did not see one of his old friends. It was possibly merely accidental that none of them noticed him as he passed their houses, but up to this day he had never ridden through the town without somebody or other asking him to step in. As he passed Captain Barker's, whose daughters had always displayed such an interest in Amy, it certainly looked suspicious that he saw the ladies behind the window-curtain, and that they withdrew as soon as they noticed him, but even then Taylor could not understand the truth.

At the Oziers things became very quiet, for the many well-to-do and respected friends who had constantly visited them remained aloof; days and weeks passed, and not one of them had been seen, although the weather was unusually fine and tempting, and the garden offered its early fruit in great profusion. However painfully the Taylors were affected by this neglect and want of sympathy, still their firm faith in the honesty of their fellow-creatures would not have been altered, had not the prejudicial reports spread about them in the town reached their ears. Deeply insulted and offended by them, Taylor exerted himself to discover the source whence these calumnies had sprung; but his researches led to no result.

For the first time in their lives the Taylors felt themselves repulsed by their fellow-creatures, and their faith in them began to falter. But they only drew their family circle more closely and intimately together in consequence, and soon arrived at the conviction that their real happiness

could never be augmented by others, and that it had always existed in themselves and their affection for each other. They devoted themselves to their duties with redoubled zeal and activity, and began making preparations, as far as they could, for leaving the Oziers. They were not now detained from their work through numerous visitors, and the saving effected by their absence was not insignificant. Ere long, the pretended friends, the cupboard friends, were forgotten; and the Taylors became daily more accustomed to the notion of leaving the pretty vale of White Horse, which they had fancied a necessity of their existence.

CHAPTER II.

LEAVING THE FARM.—THE LETTER FROM AMERICA.—THE RESOLUTION
TO EMIGRATE.—PREPARATIONS.—THE LAST NEW YEAR'S DAY.—
WALTER'S PRESENTS.—IN THE MERSEY.—THE GOLIATH.—THE
NEGRO.—FAREWELL TO ENGLAND.

THE change in the family circumstances produced an alteration in Walter Arden: he seemed to feel that he must put away childish things, and become an active aid to his beloved relatives. He was more earnest than usual, visited school indefatigably, took private lessons till late at night, and the first dawn of day found him again over his books.

Although the spring had appeared so prosperous and promising, the hopes of a good harvest daily died away, because a permanent drought had set in. The hay crop was almost a complete failure, because the grass had been burned up by the sun, and for the same reason the corn perished in the fields, for the dried-up ground was unable to offer it any nourishment. The harvest arrived, and began a month earlier than usual, but it only produced light ears and short withered haulms. Nor would the green food prosper, it dried up on the land; the barley was poor in weight, and the oats hardly repaid the trouble of reaping. These occurrences weighed heavily on the farmer's already oppressed heart, for he reckoned on this harvest to bring him in ready money, and enable him to found a

new home elsewhere. Still the hope and belief that all would turn out for the best did not desert them, and they stannchly employed all their energies in getting the harvest in the more carefully. Taylor had already visited several farms, and for that purpose remained away from the Oziers for several weeks ; but none of them suited him, some because they were valueless, others because they were too large for him to undertake with his own resources. Near at hand there was no farm to let that in any way answered his expectations, and hence he was compelled to sell his stock ; that is to say, his agricultural implements, horses, cattle, and stacks, which he was unable to remove. The time when Taylor must leave the Oziers was drawing nearer ; again and again he travelled a long distance to see a farm, but he ever returned home without the desired result.

They had entered on the last month which the Taylors were to spend at the Oziers, and as they had not yet found another farm, nothing was left them but to sell everything, and then stop quietly at the neighbouring town till they could meet with another farm. An auctioneer was therefore consulted, but the number of bidders proved to be small, and the things fetched very low prices. This was especially the case with the kine, because the hay crop had been so deficient that year, and rendered their keep expensive.

A few days after the auction, two four-horse vans loaded with furniture were standing in front of the farm-house. Mrs. Taylor came out of the house with a freshly-culled posy in her hand and tears in her eyes, and took her husband's arm. Silently and through her tears she gazed at

the pleasant old house, which had hitherto sheltered her unclouded happiness : dumb but sobbing, she bade it farewell ; with a bleeding heart she tore herself from this beloved home, not knowing when she should find another. Taylor's eyes had also grown moist ; the old house was the cradle of his forefathers, his own and that of his children. It had witnessed for a century the quiet, unpretending happiness of the family, and now their name was about to be forgotten within its walls ! He had no words for the heartbreaking leave-taking, for the last farewell, he gave the waggoner a sign to drive on, he pressed his wife's arm firmly to his side, and walked with her and the children out into the road. Slowly, and without uttering a word they followed the creaking waggon, and it was not till they reached the last turn in the road whence the Oziers could be seen that they stopped and looked back.

"We have left our old home, we are on our journey, May, and who knows whither the road will lead us," the farmer said, as he laid his hand on his wife's shoulder and kept his eyes fixed on the Oziers.

"Wherever it leads us we take our home with us ; for where we are united there is our home," Mrs. Taylor said with a loving glance, and held out her hand to the children, who clung to her, and also took leave of the Oziers with a sad heart.

In the town they were most kindly welcomed, and soon occupied the cottage which the farmer had taken. It was situated outside the town on a rising ground, in the centre of a garden, and offered a pleasant prospect of the vale, so that the Taylors had at least the enjoyment of the same

view which had delighted them for so many years at the Oziers. In a few days they were comfortably settled in their new abode ; Mrs. Taylor tried to pass her leisure hours in the garden, although the autumn gave her but little to do ; and Mr. Taylor was able to look out for a fresh farm. The proceeds of the sale amounted to about £1100, and he had £400 more out at mortgage, so that he had a capital of about £1500 at his disposal. He carried on a correspondence in all directions, and soon after his removal to the town he heard of several farms in the West of England which were vacant. He set out once more to have a look at them, but returned a few weeks later with nothing done, for not one of them suited his requirements.

The joy of meeting again at first dispelled the farmer's grief at the unsuccessful issue of his journey ; but when the lamp was lit, and the family assembled round the tea-table, Taylor expressed his very serious apprehension that he might possibly be a whole year without a farm, and be obliged to spend his money without any return for it.

"Hand me the newspapers, perhaps there is something in them," he said, after a while to his wife, and added, as she rose to obey his wishes, "Are there any letters?"

"Yes," she answered, "I was just going to give them to you. There is one from America among them. I fancy it is from your cousin Albert."

"So then, there is a sign of life from him at last," Taylor said, as his wife left the room.

The latter soon returned, and laid a bundle of papers and several letters on the table before her husband.

"It is really from Albert ! Well, I am anxious to know

how he is getting on, for it is nearly three years since I heard from him."

With these words the farmer drew the lamp nearer to him, and opened the letter. He read it with evidently increasing interest, and when he had finished the last page, he laid the letter on the table, and said with a cheerful smile to his wife, "Well, May, what do you suppose he writes?"

"I hope that he and his are doing well. I should find it difficult to guess aught else."

"No more and no less than that he invites us to cross the sea. He is doing very well; he possesses a farm below Baltimore on Chesapeake Bay, cultivates maize and tobacco, and earns thrice as much as he could do in this country with double the work. At the same time he and his family are well and hearty. He is dependent on nobody, troubled by nobody, and must be a rich man within a few years."

Mrs. Taylor looked at her husband with surprise, as if reading a thought on his face, which she did not know at the first blush whether she ought to be pleased with. But then she recovered her wonted calmness, and said—

"Still, he fared very badly at the beginning over there. I know very well that he longed to be back in old England, and I am glad that he is doing better now."

Taylor did not speak for a time, and appeared sunk in thought.

"When we think fairly of the matter," he then went on to say, "it is much the same, if we must go away, whether we proceed to America or to the west of England, and the journey is pleasanter on the water. How strange

it is though, that the letter should have arrived at this very time !”

“ But in a foreign country, among strangers, without friends,” Mrs. Taylor remarked, half frightened.

“ Without friends, May; are you beginning to long for friends again ?” Taylor said bitterly.

“ Not such bad friends, Henry, as we had about us at the Oxiers, but disinterested, honest, good-natured friends; such, I mean, as we have found here among the tradespeople. Did you not formerly say to me—— ?”

“ Yes, yes, May. You are right, as you always are, you dear, good, sensible little wifey,” Taylor said, interrupting her, and drawing her nearer to him to give her a kiss; “ but my darling pet, we can reflect on a matter such as this, and not at once throw the helve after the axe. Look here, Albert writes that good land is to be bought near him for ten to fifteen dollars an acre, and that further west government land only costs three dollars. Just think of this—whether it is not better for three such famous lads as ours that their father should have a fine estate as his own property, instead of farming land which he may be turned out of at the expiration of his lease? And now tell me honestly, if it wasn't for the water between the two continents, would you hesitate for a moment about emigrating to America ?”

“ The old proverb says,” Mrs. Taylor remarked, “ Stay at home——”

“ And act just as your fathers did, although it no longer suits the age,” her husband interrupted her. “ I only want to discuss the matter with you, May, and do not yet intend

to emigrate. There, take the letter, and read it to-morrow at your leisure."

After saying this, Taylor began skimming the papers to see, whether there was any farm offered that might suit him.

His wife had grown thoughtful, and unnoticed by the others, looked first at her husband, then at her children; but all were busily engaged in reading. Taylor spent the whole evening in looking through the papers, an operation in which he did not like to be disturbed, and hence the hours passed away very quietly.

"There," he said, "I have reserved the oldest paper to the last. But there will be as little to interest us in it as in the rest."

He took a hurried glance at the contents, and was just going to lay the paper with the others, when an advertisement on the last page attracted his attention.

"Is it possible?" he said, agreeably surprised, "The Red Farm, near Taunton, is to let on lease, as the owner will no longer farm it himself. Yes, if I could secure that, I would not hesitate for a moment. I know it very well, for I spent my boyhood in the neighbourhood: it is not too large, and excellent in every respect. I only wish I had seen this advertisement before I took my last journey. But I will write at once to the landlord, so that the letter may go by the first post to-morrow. I only hope no one has applied before me."

On the following morning, while Taylor was gone to the post, his wife sat down at the window and began reading the letter from America. She did so half repugnantly,

and with a conviction that, whatever she might read in it, she would never agree to emigrate to a strange land. While perusing it, however, she grew more attentive, she stopped repeatedly and looked thoughtfully over the top of the letter, and when she had finished reading, she began from the first line again. Her husband's cousin had so clearly shown the great advantages of America, especially for farmers, and so fully described the fertility of the soil, that Mrs. Taylor could not raise any objection, in spite of her prejudices. He had, too, made special reference to Taylor's children, and explained to him that, if he remained at the Oziers, he could never secure their future welfare, even though they all contrived to get a livelihood out of the farm. In America, he would be able to give each of his boys a farm close to his own, and then they would be provided for for life. Then he described the independent political and social circumstances, and gave such a glowing account of the splendid country and charming climate, that Mrs. Taylor saw the picture of America in a brighter light every moment.

Again and again she took up the letter from her work-table to read sundry passages once more, and she had it still lying open before her, when her husband returned from the post and entered the room.

"Well, have you read the letter, and what do you think of it?" he asked his wife.

"The letter is very sensibly written; your cousin must be doing very well, and seems to like the country," Mrs. Taylor replied, with an air of satisfaction.

"Then you see clearly now, that it would not be exactly

madness, if we were to think over the matter for a while ?” Taylor remarked, half interrogatively.

“Henry, your judgment is more free and correct than mine. Your opinion is my creed, your wish my will, and your abode my paradise ; whatever you may resolve, wherever you intend to end your days, I will follow you, were it to the end of the world. But do not let us act precipitately, and throw away what is good, before we are certain of getting something better for it. We live for our children, and what we can do for their welfare we must not regard as a sacrifice,” the wife replied, with an accent of the most loving devotion.

“You are an angel, May, and I promise you to do nothing against your wish or without your hearty assent. If I can get the Red Farm, we shall remain in England, if not, we will talk about America.”

From this moment a fresh ray of hope appeared to have fallen on the temper of the couple ; they had suddenly lost all their uncertainty about the future, for, in addition to their doubtful prospect they had a second one in America, and this daily supplied them with fairer hopes. The cousin’s letter was constantly produced ; it was read aloud and discussed at the tea-table, and the children, more especially Walter, talked of nothing but America. Even Taylor’s wish to obtain a favourable answer about the Red Farm, became daily less eager, and when at the expiration of a week the expected letter arrived from the landlord, he opened it with a slight feeling of hope that it might contain a negative answer. So it was, too, the owner of the

farm expressed his regret that he had let it a few days previously to another party.

"Here is the answer about the Red Farm, May," Taylor said to his wife, as he handed her the letter. "Providence evidently points out to us the road we must choose, for everything fails us in England. The farm is already let."

Mrs. Taylor took the letter from her husband half in terror; for though the thought about the beautiful America had affected her so agreeably, her preference for dear old England was too deeply rooted in her heart for her not to feel despondent at the thought that she must now decide on remaining in England, or bidding it an eternal farewell.

"Indeed! well, I am very sorry to hear it, for you had set your heart upon that farm, and we should have been sure of a livelihood there," she said, rather sadly.

"You see, May, how wondrously things have worked together to render us free here and direct our glances to the New World. Let us consider the subject quietly and without prejudice, but then act manfully and decidedly. The happiness of our children is at stake."

"I declare my willingness to do everything that can promote their welfare and yours, Henry. Let us reflect maturely, and then do you decide. Heaven will be gracious to us there as well as here," the wife replied, resolutely, as she seized her husband's hand, and he pressed her to his bosom. On that very evening the resolution was formed of emigrating.

Fresh life and activity were now aroused in the Taylor


family, and all their thoughts and efforts were turned to the new goal, to the new home they must establish. On the following day Taylor answered his cousin Albert, and announced to him that he had made up his mind to emigrate, with his family. He also begged him to give him the benefit of his experience as soon as possible, and to tell him what arrangements he had better make. It was a very long letter, for Taylor questioned his cousin in it about everything it seemed necessary for him to know. He had never carried a more important or more eventful letter to the post ; for it contained the future of his family. The Taylors eagerly read every book that gave them any information about America, and procured all the recognized authorities about the country, its condition and prospects. In all of them a practical, independent life was described, and the farmer was strongly recommended to rely upon himself solely. He must know how to help himself in all the circumstances of life, and for this purpose make himself acquainted with the use of different tools in case of need. Taylor, therefore, resolved to acquire some knowledge of them, and to have Walter Arden also instructed. He resolved to go as journeyman for a time to a blacksmith, and then to a gunmaker, and Walter was to receive lessons from a wheelwright and a carpenter.

Taylor carried out his resolutions with the strength of will peculiar to him. In the morning, after an early breakfast, he went to the best smith's in the town, worked there with a will till dinner time, and then again till evening, while Walter was engaged in the same way with the wheelwright. After supper, the family would sit

cheerily round the table, while Taylor unfolded a map of America, the voyage to the New World was talked over, and a thousand plans were discussed as to how they would settle down there.

The autumn storms roared through the variegated foliage of the woods, and carried the yellow and red leaves like a shower of gold before them through the Vale of White Horse; night frosts covered meadows and gardens with a rime that flashed and sparkled in the first beams of the rising sun like a veil of diamonds, and by the beginning of December winter laid a thick mantle of snow over the earth.

All the more cosily did the Taylors sit at night in their pleasantly warmed room, and discuss their promising future in a sunnier land. New Year's day approached, the last the Taylors were to spend in the old country. To add to the general joy, a letter arrived on that very day from Albert, but Mrs. Taylor kept it back, as a pleasant surprise for the evening. The boys forgot all their promised sport, and pressed round their parents to hear the news from America, and the farmer, for the sake of peace, was compelled to sit down and read it to them. Their fate was decided; they were to sail for their new home in the spring. Mrs. Taylor had brewed a famous bowl of punch in honour of the evening, and all drained their glasses to their new home. The boys laughed, joked, and shouted, while the storm without was driving the snow-flakes against the window-panes, and midnight had long passed ere the happy party retired to rest, with the most brilliant expectations for the future.



The following day was entirely devoted to Cousin Albert's letter. He gave them in it the fullest details as to the preparations for the voyage. He advised them to undertake it in the spring, and to bring as little luggage as possible, because they could buy what they wanted cheaper in America. He offered the most careful explanations on every point, any amount of advice and directions, and concluded his lengthy epistle with the wish to be able to welcome them all well and hearty in the land of sunshine.

The winter passed away amid preparations for the start; Walter went from the wheelwright to the carpenter, and Taylor gave up the anvil for the gunmaker's bench. The surrounding farmers saw with great regret Taylor's determination to leave the country, and did all in their power to help him. Presents of all sorts, supposed to be useful, poured in, and among other things, Walter became the delighted possessor of a handsome double rifle, a silver-mounted *couteau de chasse*, a game bag, and a compass.

Spring once again displayed its pleasant smiling face in the vale. The woods and fields were once more decked with verdure, the gardens glistened in their flowered glory, the swallows dashed wildly about, and sought their nests beneath the eaves, and the nightingales sang their sweet melancholy song, as if it were a dirge for the departing family.

After bidding a hearty farewell to all their friends, the Taylors set out for Liverpool, where they intended to take ship for Baltimore. As they had a few days to spare, they spent them in buying indispensables for the voyage. Taylor paid his money into a bank, and received in exchange letters of credit on Baltimore, and well provided with

everything necessary, he went with his family on board the tug that was to bear them to the sailing ship.

Their feet had now trodden for the last time their native soil, and, with a transient melancholy, they watched Liverpool gradually fading away in the distance. The wind was blowing fairly, the steamer darted buoyantly along the rapidly widening Mersey, and when the sun sank beneath the horizon, the tug ran alongside of the "Goliath," which was anchored in middle channel, in readiness to start. The captain of this fine vessel, a powerfully-built weather-beaten sailor, of the name of Beverley, greeted the family kindly, and, with his mate, helped them up the ship's side. Walter was the last on board the steamer, because he wished to make sure of his favourite dog Pluto not being left behind. He raised the dog in his arms, the mate caught it by the collar and lugged it on board, and then Walter followed. When the Taylors safely reached the deck, the captain shook hands all round, and assured them he would do all in his power to make their voyage as pleasant as possible. He then led them down to a handsomely decorated state-room, where he invited them to take a glass of wine as a welcome. The salver was brought in by a negro, at whom Master Charley at first looked rather suspiciously, but soon got over his alarm. He was a very pleasant good-tempered man, of the name of Daniel, or by contraction, Dan, and was the cabin waiter. The captain filled the glasses, and drank with them to a quick passage to the New World. Then he showed them their small cabins, whose doors opened into the state-room, and each contained two berths one above the other. Mrs.

Taylor and Amy occupied one, the father and Fred the second, and Walter and Charley the third.

They, however, soon found their way on deck, in order by the parting daylight to survey their new floating home, which was to convey them across the ocean, and serve for weeks as their abode. The Mersey was here so wide that they could scarce see its shores, and westward the eye rested on an endless water surface. The sun had reached the horizon, and while dipping into the sea let its parting beams dance and sparkle on the heaving waves, until its last gleam had disappeared, and the fiery sky was alone reflected on the undulating sea. The gloom of night brooded over the mighty expanse of water, the waves dashed impetuously at the ship, as she slowly rose and sank at her anchor, and their hollow murmur deadened the monotonous song of the sailors as they raised the bales by the aid of a windlass from a lighter alongside. Taylor was sitting on the poop-deck, and holding his wife's hand in his. The earnestness and solemnity of the surrounding scene harmonized with the disposition of their minds; they gazed at the incessantly flying waves—what storms, what reefs they were probably hurrying to meet! They thought of their own future, of their own destiny and that of the children; what fatigues, what difficulties might they not also be going to encounter.

"Like these waves we are quitting our peaceful, quiet home, May, to meet more violent storms on the great ocean of life, but perhaps greater happiness," Taylor said, after a lengthened silence.

"The waves are not driven away from home by any

anxiety for the happiness of others, but we are emigrating for the sake of our darlings, whose fortunes we wish to establish. In our love for them we will endure any burden fate may impose on us; we have left the matter to God, and He will direct it for the welfare of all," the wife replied, looking up with a confident heart to the star-spangled sky, while Taylor pressed her hand to his lips.

The boys, who had been looking at the sailors at work on the main-deck, now returned, led by Walter, to their parents, and snuggled down by their side; for everything was so new and strange to them, and the rapidly growing darkness augmented the uncomfortable feeling which the desolate scene around produced upon them.

"To-morrow morning we shall be off to sea," Taylor said to the children; "the voyage across the ocean is accompanied by many perils, and every possible precaution must be taken not to expose one's-self to them unnecessarily. Always keep close to us, and if we should not be on deck, be sure and follow Watty's advice."

At this moment the captain came up, and invited them down to supper.

"I think you will enjoy the first meal aboard the 'Goliath,' after your long day's trip; to-morrow, when the ship is under weigh, it is possible that you may not have such an appetite."

With these words the captain let his passengers go before him to the state-room, and when he closed the procession with Walter, and saw that Pluto was following close at the boy's heels, he remarked—

"We must find a place for the dog, my boy, to-morrow, where we can tie it up, so that no accident may happen to it among the sailors. * It is really a noble dog."

"Yes, and a brave, faithful doggy, and there are few like him," Walter proudly replied, as he patted the dog's shaggy back.

CHAPTER III.

THE ANCHOR WEIGHED.—CATCHING A PORPOISE.—THE NEGRO'S
STORIES.—LIFE ABOARD.—THE STORM.—THE AURORA BOREALIS.—
FARMING IN AMERICA.—THE FAR WEST.—THE FOG.—THE ICE-
BERG.—A DREADFUL SITUATION.—THE ESCAPE.—ARRIVAL IN
CHESAPEAKE BAY.

THE passengers were on the next morning in the soundest sleep, when they were suddenly aroused by the rattling of the heavy anchor-chain, and felt themselves tossed backwards and forwards in their berths. They quickly dressed and hurried on deck to bid farewell to land; for the ship was already under full sail, and bounding under the impulse of a powerful breeze toward the sea. The waves rose higher and larger, they became more transparent and green, their crests were covered with white foam, and as they leapt over one another, they dashed a shower of spray far and wide.

The land had by this time become like a strip of mist; still the eyes of the wanderers were firmly fixed on this last sign of their beloved country, and water had long formed the sole limit of vision when they still fancied they could see land, and waved their hands towards it. The "Goliath" was hardly well out to sea ere the wind chopped round, and became considerably more violent, and as the ship had to contend both against wind and wave, her motion

became, to say the least of it, unpleasant. The result was that the passengers were attacked by the *mal de mer*, declined any breakfast, and returned to their berths. Nor could Daniel's announcement that dinner was on the table induce them to leave their beds, for the very thought of food was a horror to them. In the afternoon, however, they did not feel quite so bad, the ship did not roll so tremendously, and they gradually crawled out of their berths. The "Goliath" had tacked, and as the wind now blew into her sails sideways, the movement became more regular, and the passengers' illness decreased to the same extent.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor recovered less rapidly, and were compelled to lie down on deck upon horse-rugs, which Daniel spread out for them; but the boys soon forgot the sea sickness, and revelled in the novel and splendidly grand scene that surrounded them. Covered with expanded canvas almost to the trucks, the ship climbed up the transparent emerald mountains of water, divided their foaming crests, then sunk into the hollow to rise again upon the next wave. The sun shone through the rent cloud-masses, and here and there cast bright pencils of light upon the heaving sea, and the spray shower which was raised by the sharp bows of the "Goliath," and dashed sideways over the deck, glistened with all the colours of the rainbow.

In the middle of the deck the long-boat was fastened, bottom upwards, upon several beams, so that a shelter from rain and sunshine was afforded beneath it. Walter selected this spot as the boys' headquarters, so soon as the sailors came on deck to perform their duties. But now that the ship had become more quiet, and was sailing

before the wind without further assistance, the three boys climbed on to the top of the boat, because they could there enjoy an uninterrupted view of the sea over the bulwarks. Daniel, the negro, took great pleasure in the boys, and whenever he had a few minutes of leisure, joined them to have a chat, for he had been serving two years on board the ship, and spoke English very decently. The boys soon felt confidence in the honest black, and called upon him to explain to them anything they did not understand. The white and parti-coloured, large and small, aquatic birds which sailed across the sea with their long scythe-shaped wings, and every now and then dipped into the foam, especially attracted the boys' attention; and Dan told them about the rocky islands to the north of Scotland on which these birds brooded in countless swarms.

"Fish, large fish!" the boys suddenly cried in one voice, and pointed out to sea.

"Those are porpoises. They are steering straight down on us, and will soon surround the 'Goliath;' they are very fond of sporting in the foam in front of a vessel," the negro replied, as he also gazed at the huge fish, several hundred of which now darted up, leaping out of the sea, describing an arch in the air, and then returning to the water head-foremost. In their playful course they darted with the speed of an arrow through the waves, dashing up the spray around, and had come within a hundred yards of the vessel, when Walter proposed to run down to his cabin and fetch his rifle. But Daniel stopped him, and explained that a rifle was not the proper weapon to employ in the capture of these fish.

"I can catch one with a harpoon," he said, leaping up.
"Shall I fetch it?"

"Oh, yes, Dan, look sharp; the fish are close to the ship. Good gracious, how they jump!" the boys cried. Daniel hurried down into the cabin, in order to satisfy their wish. A few minutes after he appeared on the lower deck with a piece of iron two feet long, whose sharp point was provided with hooks, thrust a long heavy pole into its hollow end, fastened a strong cord to it, and then made the boys a sign to come down to him. They followed the negro with shouts of joy to the bows of the ship, where he fastened the rope to the bulwarks, over which the boys looked down into the sea, and watched the fish as they darted backwards and forwards. Daniel had gone a little way up the fore-mast shrouds, and stood there with the harpoon in readiness for a dart. The fish appeared to have a special predilection for dashing sideways at the ship, and into the mass of foam which its track left behind it. Daniel repeatedly poised the harpoon, as if about to dart it, but still held back in order to be certain of his aim. Suddenly, however, it hurled through the air, and its point was deeply buried in the back of one of the fish.

"Hit, hit!" Walter shouted joyously; but the fish had darted down, and dragged the long cord after it with a whirring sound. In a few minutes, however, it had run out the whole of the cord, and it could be seen that the harpooned porpoise was pulling and dragging at it with great force. Daniel now called some of the sailors to help him in dragging his prey on deck. The cord was pulled in with a great effort. The fish soon appeared, struggling

and fighting above the waves, and the sailors at last dragged it over the bulwarks, and let it fall on the deck. It was an enormous animal, not covered with scales, but with a brown, smooth skin, and weighing upwards of two hundred pounds. It soon bled to death, and the sailors cut out its liver, the only part fit to eat; it was then cut up and boiled down for the sake of the oil it contained.

Through this sporting adventure Daniel caused his young friends a great pleasure, and established himself still more firmly in their good graces.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor now felt so much better that they appeared at the table, though they could not manage to swallow anything beyond a cup of tea and a piece of biscuit. Then, however, they hastened back to the deck, because the fresh sea-breeze did them so much good, and the attentive Daniel again prepared them there a bed of horse-rugs. Amy had not left her mother the whole day; made her lemonade, gave her now and then a slice of orange, and was at every moment ready to obey her slightest sign.

The captain came repeatedly to his passengers to inquire after their health, and when evening set in, he sat down for a pleasant dish of chat with them.

"The boys appear to be sworn friends with Daniel," Mr. Taylor said to the captain; "he has won their hearts by catching the fish. They are now all three sitting with him again, and making him tell them stories."

"The negro is a remarkably good fellow, a first-rate servant, and a man who has gone through a good deal in

his time," the captain answered. "His parents were the slaves of an Indian tribe in the Far West, where he was born and passed his youth. On the death of his father and mother, however, he ran away from the Indians ; after a long pursuit succeeded in reaching the border settlements, and then went as a free black to New York, where he earned an honest livelihood for several years. I formed his acquaintance a few years back, when I was having my vessel repaired in that port, and engaged him as one of the workmen. I learnt to like him, and made him the offer to go to sea with me, and be my steward's mate. He accepted, and up to the present day we have never exchanged an angry word. He is a trustworthy, honest, and faithful fellow."

"He produced that impression on me from the first moment, and I am glad he has taken to the boys, for he will watch over them," Taylor replied, looking at the negro, who was sitting between the three lads on the boat, and busily conversing with them.

He was telling them about his life among the savages, hunting buffaloes, bears, and wild horses, the sanguinary fights among the various Indian tribes, and the glorious prairies, still untrodden by white men, on which the Redskins pass their nomadic, homeless existence. The boys listened with the most greedy attention to the black's stories, and rarely interrupted him by any questions ; Walter, more especially, was all ear, and already mentally saw himself on the back of a fast horse pursuing the flying buffalo, or killing a savage bear in a desperate contest. Darkness had spread over the sea, and the night air was becoming perceptibly

cool, when Mr. Taylor disturbed the boys by warning them that it was time to go to bed.

"Uncle, you should have heard what Dan has been telling us," Walter said when they reached the state-room; "he has been describing hunting expeditions to us; the buffaloes are pursued on horseback, you gallop up to their side and shoot them with pistols. That must be fun!"

"But very dangerous fun, my dear Watty, in which you may easily break neck and limbs or be trampled under the buffalo's hoofs," Taylor remarked with a smile; "where we are going to settle, there are no buffaloes left."

"That is a pity, for I should have liked to join in such a hunt once," Walter said, with an expression of disappointed hope.

"Well, who knows whether you may not take a trip to the West, for it is not so very far," the farmer said, consolingly; and added, "when we have got our farm in order and had a couple of good harvest-homes, we may spend a few winter months in seeing the western country; the soil there is said to be splendid!"

"The best in all America, Daniel says," Walter answered quickly and enthusiastically.

"And buffaloes and bears, and wild horses by thousands, are there not?" Taylor interrupted him laughingly; "well, now, for goodness' sake go to bed and dream, if you like, that you are taking a ride on a buffalo."

The night passed without any disturbance, the sleepers were lulled into pleasant dreams by the rocking motion of the vessel, and at an early hour they were again on deck in excellent spirits. The sun rose splendidly and brightly

out of the sea, the sky was cloudless and diaphanous over the heaving waters, and the fresh breeze filled the sails of the "Goliath" and drove it hurriedly along its solitary track.

Mrs. Taylor brought some needlework on deck for herself and Amy, so as not to pass the time in idleness, and the farmer sat down with a book describing America. Walter and the other two boys again mounted the boat, to gaze at the sea, and see whether another opportunity for sport might not present itself. Daniel joined the boys whenever his duties permitted it, and was then assailed by them with a thousand questions; but he deferred any further anecdotes about his life in the desert until evening, when he would have less to do.

A striking calm and quiet prevailed on board the ship. The sailors were seated on the lower deck, engaged in mending sails, or were hanging about the rigging repairing small damages, while the captain walked up and down, giving his directions. Now and then he called the men up to haul a sail tauter, but with that exception the ship required no special attention. They sailed the whole day through in the same direction, and the same scenes, the same appearances continually surrounded them. The Taylors looked out seawards many a time, and followed the course of the rolling waves, but these in their regular motion did not offer the eye the slightest variety, and the farmer remarked to Captain Beverley, when the latter on one occasion came up to them, that a lengthened sea voyage must surely be very monotonous, and even wearisome.

"We will hope that in that respect ours may remain very wearisome, for any change would only be for the worse. If we had a calm we should not stir from the spot, and a storm, however beautiful and interesting landmen may fancy it to be, is always a dangerous amusement. Wind and weather such as we have to-day are always the sailor's highest delight, and this wind would carry us to Baltimore in less than a fortnight."

"I am quite ready to decline any change," said Mrs. Taylor; "may heaven preserve us from storms!"

"We are now in the favourable season, when they are least to be apprehended, and I trust that you will not make their acquaintance," the captain replied.

The day passed away quietly and cheerily, and the evening was heartily welcomed by Walter and his companions, because directly after tea Daniel joined them and told them about his life in the wilderness.

The following morning the passengers, while still in their berths, felt by the violent motion of the ship that a change of weather must have taken place. The first sight of the deck proved the truth of their supposition; a very violent breeze was chasing heavy gray clouds, the waves were constantly growing higher and dashing impetuously against the sides of the "Goliath." The sailors were busily engaged in getting in the top-sails, and reefing the lower ones. All work on deck was stopped. All the sheets were lying coiled on the bulwarks for ready use, and the greatest order ruled all over the ship. To Mrs. Taylor's inquiry of the captain, whether he felt any apprehension about the weather, he replied that it seemed to be

growing unfavourable, and that he must take every precaution to meet it. The wind increased in violence every hour, until towards evening a regular southwesterly gale was blowing. The gloom of night augmented the horror of the scene which the "Goliath" now offered. The sea rose all around it in rolling mountains of water. The waves broke with a thundering noise beneath its keel, and the white foam, rising high in air, poured down on the deck. At the same time the wind whistled and roared amid the rigging, and threatened to tear away the small amount of canvas the ship still carried. The spray, which incessantly dashed on the deck, had driven the passengers down into the cabin; here they sat by the dull light of the swinging lamp, and listened to the roaring of the storm and the groaning and creaking of the ship and its masts. It was close on midnight, when the captain, who was wet through, came down to change his coat, and found his passengers still up. He assured them that there was not the slightest danger, and earnestly entreated them to go to bed; he would watch for them. The Taylors yielded to his representations; but for all that, passed a very restless night, and most heartily welcomed daylight.

At length the storm began to give way; it only vented its fury in gasps. The blue waves grew longer, decreased in height, and the sea gradually resumed a more friendly aspect. The temperature, however, had undergone a considerable change. It had become extremely cold, so that the passengers were obliged to put on great coats and shawls, and one morning when they came on deck they found the rigging covered with a hoar frost. Not a cloud

was visible in the sky, and when the sun poured forth its beams over the sea, the frost and cold disappeared, and a mild southerly wind reminded the travellers that they were in the merry month of May. The sea had become smooth again. It only heaved as if drawing a long breath, and very rarely did a white foam-crest run sportively over the mirrored surface.

The light wind expanded the sails of the "Goliath," and it moved slowly and majestically over the sea. It was Sunday, and a perfect holiday both to passengers and crew, after such an unpleasant and dangerous time. After service had been read by the captain, they all hurried on deck to enjoy the glorious weather. The sky and the sea smiled a greeting to them, the soaring sea-mews seemed to welcome them with hoarse cries, and the merry porpoises leapt and darted over the water. The passengers watched daylight depart with regret, and the Taylors assembled on the poop-deck to wave a grateful farewell to the setting sun.

The nearer the luminary drew to its watery bed, the more brilliantly the western sky was bedecked in gold and purple; and when at last the glowing transparent ball stood on the edge of the sea, and its dazzling sparkling beams danced like a diamond-sown path along the gently rippled sea, up to the ship's side, the heavens above it were converted into a sea of fire.

On the other side of the ocean, however, the moon rose at this moment above the dark sea, poured forth its pearly light around, and sent a trembling stripe of satin over the waves toward the "Goliath." At the same moment

the passengers' admiring eyes were attracted northward, for here a third light appeared in the firmament, which rose from the sea in delicate pink beams, till it reached the centre of the celestial vault, and was also reflected on the waves. It was the aurora borealis, which every second increased in vividness and density of colour, till it passed into a gleaming crimson, and united with the fire sea above the setting sun and the pearly light of the moon. The sun was the first to depart, the northern lights gradually faded away in their turn, and the moon triumphantly rose in the heavens, and, as the queen of night, shed her satin sheen over the boundless waters.

The passengers sat for a long time in silent admiration, and fancied they could still see the enchanting spectacle.

"Ah! how lovely is the sea, how splendid, how fearfully great in its wrath; how pleasant, how magical in its tranquillity," Mrs. Taylor said, in deep emotion, as the captain walked up to her, and noticed, with a certain degree of pride, the veneration which the family paid to his home—the sea.

"It must, indeed, be fine; for what else is it that attracts the seafarer with such irresistible force again and again to its blue waves, until he at length finds a mighty grave beneath them? What becomes of all the sailors? How rarely does an old salt die ashore, and how seldom do we find one there who has acquired wealth! The sea is a fairer home than land," the captain said, and looked with pleasure at its heaving surface.

The next morning the passengers found a favourable

north-east wind, and they went on thus for several days without the slightest variation.

Satisfied by the thought that they had sacrificed a quiet life in their own country on behalf of their children, and exposed themselves for them to the dangers of the deep, as well as those they might meet in a strange country, and among strange people, the Taylors found the days pass pleasantly; and the cheerful hope of soon reaching the end of their voyage, and setting foot on the soil of their new home, became daily more confirmed in their hearts. But the boys, who felt no anxiety about the future, did not count the hours or days; they only longed on every fresh morning for the evening, when their friend Daniel would join them, and tell them stories about his youth. Before the boys went to bed, they generally repeated to their parents fragments of Dan's anecdotes, so that Taylor himself became curious, and resolved to ask the negro a few questions. One quiet evening, when Daniel had his youthful audience assembled round him, the farmer walked up, as if accidentally, and sat down among them with the remark—

“Come, Daniel, I too must hear something about your former life. I understand that you grew up among the Indians.”

“Yes, sir, my parents were slaves of one of the Indian tribes that roam about the Far West all the year long, and in pursuit of the buffalo go in the spring northward, and in autumn to the south again. They live entirely by hunting, and take large herds of horses and mules with them, for which they always seek the best pasturage,” the negro answered.

"In that case you have had opportunity to see different parts of America, and compare them. Where is the best place for a farmer to settle, in your opinion?"

"Certainly in the south-west, for the richest evergreen meadows are there, where cattle can live in the open air, winter and summer, always find ample food, and cost their owners neither money nor trouble. Any one who has a liking for cattle-breeding must become a rich man there. In the north, where snow lies for months in the winter and frost kills the grass, the farmer can only keep so many head of cattle as he is able to support under cover in winter. He is, therefore, obliged to apply himself more to agriculture; and even in that respect the north is far inferior to the south, where you can sow and reap all the year."

"That is self-evident; but it is very unhealthy in the south, and a white man cannot stand work there long."

"That is why I mentioned the south-west," Daniel observed; "there it is healthy—the wind can blow freely on the open, treeless prairies, and there are no stagnant, putrified ponds or swamps, as in the south-eastern states."

"But those western territories are still held by the savages, and a settler is exposed to great danger there," Taylor objected. "Have you ever been in Baltimore, and do you know the land on the shores of Chesapeake Bay?"

"I worked for a year on a farm there. It is a fine fertile district, although the very severe winter often checks cattle-breeding. In autumn there are fevers round the bay, though they are not so bad as further down south."

"So you worked on a farm there, did you? Pray, what did you do on it?"

"Well, everything that falls to a farmer's lot. I had taken service with a widow, and with another negro, her slave, I managed the whole of the farm. I ploughed, sowed, reaped, made fences, and got the harvest in. We grew Indian corn and tobacco, and earned a deal of money for the widow."

"What does land cost there?" Taylor asked.

"It varies greatly. You can buy poor land for ten dollars, and first-rate for a hundred dollars the acre."

"Indeed, it fetches so much as that, does it? I was told that the best land could be bought for ten dollars," Taylor remarked in surprise.

"Yes, yes; in America men always talk in their own interest. The man who told you that had his own advantage in view."

"Not at all, it was my own cousin who wrote me so," Taylor replied, half in thought, and then hurriedly added, "but in the west land is still cheap."

"Government land costs two and a half dollars, good or bad, just as you choose it. But in the neighbourhood of settlements all the good land has been bought up by speculators, and so you are obliged to go further into Indian territory. But between the settlements the very best land can be bought at from four to ten dollars," the negro said.

"The difference would be very considerable," Taylor remarked; and said as he rose, "but I am disturbing your chat with the boys, so tell them now about the hunts you

had in that glorious country. In truth, were not my future abode decided on, I should be inclined to make a trial there."

"Which in the long run would please you better than in the old Eastern states," the negro remarked, as the farmer returned to his wife and daughter.

A few days after the temperature again suffered a marked change, and the passengers once more had recourse to their great-coats. Although the captain made no remark, various arrangements showed that he apprehended something. The sail was considerably reduced in spite of the favourable wind, so that the ship went through the water very slowly. Two men were sent up to the tops, to survey the sea constantly, and the captain himself went aloft several times. About midday a dense fog from the north spread over the sea, and so thoroughly covered the ship, that it was scarce possible to see from one end of it to the other. At the same time the cold greatly increased, and with it the captain's anxiety. Taylor asked him about the cause of the fog, to which Captain Beverley replied evasively that the ship was on the Newfoundland bank, where such fogs were very frequent.

Midday passed without the slightest change in the atmosphere, but the precautions were doubled on board, and the passengers frequently noticed the captain let down a thermometer into the sea and examine it carefully when he drew it up. The darkness was increasing when Daniel summoned them to tea. The passengers were generally preceded by the captain at meals, but on this occasion he begged them to go before him and he would follow. It



The Goliath on an Iceberg.—Page 51.

was not till the Taylors had finished tea that the captain came, down and appeared very anxious to get back to the deck. Daniel had just poured him out a cup, and he was raising it to his lips, when a frightful crash shook the vessel as if it were going to pieces.

"Ice, ice, the Lord be merciful to us!" the captain shouted, and at the same moment passengers, tables, chairs, and crockery were hurled to the other end of the stateroom. The shrieks raised by Mrs. Taylor and Amy were deadened by the noise of falling spars, barrels, chests, and bales.

Captain Beverley was the first who succeeded in leaving the cabin, and then by a great effort and by Daniel's assistance, the Taylors reached the deck.

A fearful, awful sight was here offered them. The ship stood, like a rearing steed, with its bows raised skywards, and a little on one side of it could be seen the glistening giant outlines of an iceberg forty feet in height. The "Goliath" stood motionless, as if rooted in the ground, with its bows raised out of the water on the ice, while the sea washed the stern up to the cabin windows. In this way it drifted slowly with the colossal mass of ice upon the waves.

The confusion, alarm, and despair among the crew and passengers were indescribable; all ran wildly about, as far as the sloping deck allowed; they shrieked, wept, prayed, and fancied every moment that the "Goliath" would break asunder; but it did not stir, and seemed as if it had taken the ice prisoner.

The Taylors kept together, as if they would not be

parted even in death. The first quarter of an hour was the most awful, but then despair began to make way for hopeful things, and they ere long examined into and discussed their situation. The captain was the calmest and most determined man on board ; he had the hatches taken off, and himself went down into the hold to see whether the "Goliath" had suffered any damage. But not a sign of a leak was visible. With hopeful confidence he went up to the Taylors and assured them of his firm conviction that the ship would be got off the ice without damage.

"We have at least three months' provisions on board," he said, "and in a few days we shall drift into the Gulf stream, in whose warm water the ice will very soon melt under the ship. Only a storm could prove dangerous to us ; but in this season and these latitudes we have no cause to fear that."

The night was passed in great alarm, and the slightest creaking of the planks startled the passengers, and sounded like a death-warning in their ears. At the same time the cold increased so greatly that cloaks and rugs were no protection against it, and day was awaited with anxious yearning. At dawn the wind rose, and as the iceberg had turned in such a way that the ship had its bows directed to the breeze ; the captain had all sail set in the hope that they would draw the "Goliath" off the ice again. They certainly filled and bent the masts and yards, but the ship did not stir. At this moment the idea occurred to the captain of trying whether he could not move the ship by the help of the anchor ; the largest was let down into a boat, the chain was drawn from the bows of the "Goliath" under its

keel, and the heavy anchor was cast into the sea about twenty yards from the ship's stern. It sank deep into the water at the extreme edge of the iceberg, and the captain then ordered all hands to the capstan to weigh anchor. The question was whether the anchor, in being hoisted, would catch hold of the ice under water, for then there might be a chance of its dragging the ship back to it.

The capstan was turned for some time, but then suddenly stopped, for the anchor was home. Several sails were then set, the masts bent and groaned, the anchor-chain creaked, the ship tottered, heaved over, and with a final effort it slid back into the water. A hearty cheer broke forth from all parts of the deck, for the "Goliath" was now lightly dancing on the waves, and the iceberg drifted sulkily past it. The anchor was hoisted, the ship brought before the wind, and was soon sailing again calmly for its destination. From this moment the passengers on board the "Goliath" saw the sea in its best temper; the sun no longer hid itself from them from the moment of rising to that of setting, and in the course of a week the sea suddenly turned green, a sure sign that land was not far distant. The coast of America was ere long saluted with hearty cheers, and with filled sails the "Goliath" proudly entered Chesapeake Bay.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LANDING.—THE COUNTRY TRIP.—MELANCHOLY NEWS.—LEFT TO
THEMSELVES.—LOOKING FOR A FARM.—THE BANK FAILURE.—
MR. TAYLOR'S DESPAIR.—WALTER FORMS A RESOLVE.—CONVER-
SATION WITH DANIEL.

THE Taylors gazed in delight across the glorious bay at every farm-house, at every cabin, which peeped out pleasantly and cheerily from under the tall clump of trees—for was not their new home to be established on these shores? They were obliged to spend one night more aboard the "Goliath," but hoped to tread the soil of America on the morrow. The passengers rested but for a few hours during this night, for the moonbeams illuminated the coasts with the brightness of day, so that the emigrants constantly gazed at them; and the hundreds of large and small vessels that darted past them with their white swelling sails, kept them on deck till late at night. Day, however, scarce dawned, ere they all hurried up from the cabin to cheer their eyes again with the sight of the beautiful shores, and to welcome every farm they passed; for Cousin Albert lived on the bay, and had long known that they intended to come in the "Goliath." The name of the vessel was painted in large black letters on the bows, so that their cousin could read it with the aid of a telescope; possibly he would hurry at once to Baltimore, and

receive his dear expected relatives on their arrival there. The sun was already setting, when the steeples of the city arose in the blue distance, and the shades of evening were descending on the earth when the "Goliath" reached the promontory, whence Baltimore extends far away to the hills. At the Point, as the outermost part of the city was called, all large vessels brought up, and the "Goliath" was very soon laid alongside a wharf, and her canvas stripped off her.

With a silent thanksgiving Taylor with his wife and children stepped ashore, in order at once to post a letter for Albert, so that he might soon hasten to them. Daniel, who was acquainted with the city, was ordered to accompany them, and Captain Beverley promised to wait supper till their return, as it was too late for them to remove to an inn. Daniel advised Taylor to take a carriage, because it was half an hour's walk to the city, and they would find it tiring after such a long voyage, where they had been unable to stretch their legs. Taylor followed the negro's advice, less through fear at the long walk than that he did not like to keep the captain's supper waiting. At the first corner they got into a vehicle. Daniel seated himself by the side of the black driver, and the horses galloped off.

The fine buildings, the churches, with their cupolas and steeples, the monuments, and crowds of people on the pavement, all illumined by the moonlight, produced a startling though agreeable effect on the new comers, and the thought of living in the vicinity of so busy a town cheered their spirits. The post-office was soon reached,

the letter put in, and without any delay the driver turned his horses towards the Point again. At an early hour the next morning our passengers left the ship and its kind captain, and took lodgings at a second-class inn, close to the wharf where the "Goliath" lay. Captain Beverley, who had known the landlord for years, himself took the Taylors there, and they were soon comfortably settled.

Taylor then proceeded to the bank on which his bills were drawn, in order to receive the cash for them. From the bank he took up four thousand dollars in gold, and left the rest, about three thousand dollars, standing, that he might not run the risk of being robbed of all he possessed.

"It is better," he said to his wife, "for us to have only a portion of the money in the house ; it cannot be stolen from us in the bank."

The third and fourth day passed, and they had neither seen Cousin Albert nor heard from him ; for Taylor went morning and evening to the post to inquire for letters. This silence was very disagreeable to him and his, although it did not render him at all anxious, because it could be explained by the irregular nature of the postal system on cross roads. But when the fifth day passed without a sign from his cousin, Taylor resolved to go to him and take him by surprise.

The landlord, whom Taylor told where his cousin resided, advised him to hire a vehicle and be driven out there, even though the journey could be made more rapidly by sea. In a sailing boat he would be more dependent on wind and tide, and have less comfort, while the expenses would be about the same. The next morn-

ing, at daybreak, Taylor started, and took Walter Arden with him that he might not be quite alone. It was a glorious bright morning, the sun soon dispelled the mist that had spread from the bay far across the country, and with a glad, courageous heart Taylor greeted the wooded heights along which the rough road ran. Gaily coloured birds, glistening in the golden sunshine, fluttered through the fresh green wood, or sang their matin chant on the tall trees; grey and black squirrels darted across the road, or sported about the branches, and, to Walter's intense delight, an immense white-headed eagle settled down on an oak tree, at no great distance from the passing carriage. Walter shouted to the driver to stop, jumped out of the carriage rifle in hand, and hurried up the mound on which the oak grew. At this moment an osprey raised a loud cry over the adjacent bay, which Walter could survey from his elevation, darted like lightning down on the water and then came up again with a large fish in its claws. It had scarce risen with its prey, however, ere the eagle darted from the oak and pursued it. The osprey rose with a shrill yell in the air, but the white-head followed it with a mighty flapping of wings, until the flying bird let the fish drop, which the eagle caught in its fall, and carried back to the oak to enjoy a comfortable meal.

Walter, hidden behind a tree, had watched the chase, and now cautiously approached within shot of the robber, which was busily engaged in devouring the fish. The rifle cracked and the eagle, shot through the breast, fell dead on the ground with the fish. Walter carried both in

triumph to the carriage, and told his uncle all about his sport with great delight.

"That is the way of the world, Wally; the more powerful oppress and plunder the weaker," Taylor said, with a smile.

"But, uncle, I have punished the robber," Walter said with some confusion.

"Yes, because it afforded you pleasure to kill the bird," Taylor replied jestingly; "still, you hit it fairly, and you already shoot very certainly with a rifle."

The road, during the entire journey, offered the most delightful variety; at one moment it ran through rich extensive pastures, on which large herds of splendid cattle were feeding, then it passed wide maize and tobacco fields, and pleasant planters' houses; at another moment it was overshadowed by lofty primæval forests, which formed an arcade, and only at intervals allowed a sunbeam to fall on the ground, which was covered with gigantic weeds. Then again, it wound along barren heights, whence the green bay could be surveyed, on which innumerable vessels of all sizes displayed their white sails. The nearer Taylor came to his journey's end, the more eager did he feel for the moment when he should see his cousin, and he repeatedly asked the driver how far they still had to go. At length, just at sunset, the driver pointed to a farm lying a little distance off the road, on the bay, and said that was the place. Hardly a quarter of an hour was spent in reaching it, and with a beating heart Taylor leaped out of the carriage and hurried through the small, neglected garden to the house. His eyes wandered in all

directions to catch a glimpse of his cousin, when a man in his shirt-sleeves came out of the house-door, under the verandah, and gazed in amazement at the new comers. Taylor went up to him and asked him politely whether Mr. Albert Taylor lived here, and if he were at home?

"Mr. Albert Taylor is dead; he died two months back of a fever; I bought this farm of his widow, and, as far as I know, she has gone back to England," the man answered in a careless tone, and then added, "Won't you step inside, stranger?"

Taylor stood as if struck by lightning, and gazed at the man as if trying to discover whether he had heard correctly.

"My cousin dead!" he then suddenly exclaimed, clasping his hands together; "it is not possible!"

"Then they behaved very badly to him, for he lies under that maple tree, where he wished to be buried before he died," the farmer replied, and then took a pannikin of water out of a bucket near the door, and handed it to Taylor with the words, "won't you take a fresh drink, stranger?"

Taylor, without replying, sank, overpowered by sorrow, on a bench, and hid his face in his hands, while Walter threw his arms sympathizingly round his neck. In a few minutes, however, Taylor recovered himself, and asked the present owner of the farm whether there was any inn near where he could pass the night?

"There's lots of dram-shops along the road, but no inn: the nearest is ten miles off. Still, if you like to stay with me, you are welcome. You must put up with pot-

luck though, for I haven't a wife," the farmer said, and bade the driver take out his horses and put them in the stable.

Taylor was obliged to accept the offer, but passed a fearful night beneath the roof, where he had hoped to find advice, assistance, and affection for himself and his family. Now he was alone, deserted and friendless in this foreign land. Where and how should he seek and find a new home? Hopeless, he began on the next morning his return journey to Baltimore, and at sunset reached the city with a terrible heart-sinking, for he must now deprive his family of their happy peace of mind, and break the terrible news to them.

"Good gracious, Henry, alone!" Mrs. Taylor said to him as he got out of the carriage, and she read the dreadful truth on his features.

Taylor lovingly wound his arm round her waist, and silently led her to their sitting-room. Here he informed her of the melancholy occurrence, which at the first moment overwhelmed her too. She turned pale, trembled, and threw herself with tears on her husband's breast, but she soon regained courage on thinking of the Almighty, who had ever so mercifully helped them in need, and had so recently saved them from certain destruction at sea. They consoled one another, steadfastly believed that "all things work together for them that love God," and resolved to follow cautiously, but without despondency, the road they had entered on for the welfare of their children. Taylor would not be over hasty in buying a farm; he intended to look about for one quietly, and be very careful in the choice of one, that it was in a healthy neighbourhood.

His landlord cheered him up too: he was acquainted with nearly all the farmers who lived near the bay, as they generally brought all their produce to town in boats, and put up at his house. Taylor still possessed about seven thousand dollars in ready money, and the landlord had told him of many pretty and very profitable farms, which had been bought, fully stocked, for less. Until autumn he had time to look about him, and as he lived very cheaply, the lengthened stay at the inn caused him no anxiety. In a few days several farmers from the country put up at the inn. The landlord introduced Taylor to them, and they hospitably invited him to sail home with them, as they would show him several plantations that were for sale; Taylor accepted the proposal, stayed away for a week, and returned extremely satisfied, although he had not made up his mind to purchase, but wished to look at some other estates first. He consequently took several short trips inland for that purpose, because he was told that fever was less prevalent there than on the shores of the bay, and his satisfaction with the country daily increased. Captain Beverley, who was engaged in stowing a fresh cargo for Liverpool, frequently visited the Taylors in the evening, and was always pleased to hear that they liked their new home.

One morning Taylor was sitting with the landlord on a bench before the inn door, and discussing with him the advantages and disadvantages of a farm that had been offered him close to the city. They had been talking together for nearly an hour, and hardly noticed that the street was more crowded than usual with pedestrians, who

were hurrying to the upper town. At last, however, a party of young men came past, one of whom shouted to the landlord that a bank had stopped payment, and was being regularly besieged by the mob. Taylor made further inquiries, and learned, to his horror, that it was the very bank in which his money was. With trembling lips he told this to the landlord, and implored him to help him in saving his property. The landlord was ready to accompany him at once. They got into a carriage without delay, and hurried up town. The further they drove, the more animated they found the streets, and the crowd at length became so dense that the carriage could not go any further. Taylor and the landlord got out, and soon after reached the closed banking-house, in front of which thousands of people were assembled.

"To whom must I apply, in order to get back at least a part of my money?" Taylor asked the landlord in his alarm.

"My dear sir, I am very sorry to be obliged to say it, but I would not give a dollar for your whole claim. As I hear, the bank has made an enormous paper issue, the manager and cashier have bolted with the cash, and no one will get a cent back. You must put up with your loss, for it can't be helped. If you had asked my advice, I should have warned you against leaving your money in this bank."

With this consolation the landlord seized Taylor's arm and led him out of the crowd, to remove him from a spot which had cost him nearly half his fortune.

This new blow was too heavy for the Taylors to recover

from it at once. All the consolation that the kind landlord and Captain Beverley tried to offer them was not listened to; they gave way to their grief and looked with despair at their children. Several days passed, during which they had formed no resolution, and indeed could hardly survey their position. They scarce left their room; sat there with their children sunk in grief, and thought sadly of the pleasant Vale of White Horse. One evening when the sun was setting, and the evening breeze blew refreshingly through the door and windows, Taylor was sitting in the darkest corner of the room with his wife and giving vent to his feelings.

"We have not quite four thousand dollars left, and with that sum we cannot buy a farm here that would support us. Our only working power consists of Walter's and my arms, and though we would gladly do our part, the mode of working in this country is too new and strange for us to be able to effect much. If we had not lost the money we could hire or buy a slave, whom we should have treated kindly, and not as a human chattel. But now we have not even money enough to purchase land, cattle, and tools. I do not know what will become of us here."

Walter Arden, who had during these days noticed with a heavy heart the sorrow of his beloved foster parents, was now sitting silently near them, and watching their hopelessness and despair. All at once he raised his head, his eyes sparkled, and revealed that he had a gleam of hope. He silently rose, took his hat and stick, and left the room. He hurried along the now solitary streets to the wharf, where the "Goliath" lay, and a few minutes

later stood on the vessel's deck. The sailors welcomed him most heartily, for they all liked the lad, but told him that the captain had gone into town. Walter stated that he had come to speak to Daniel, from whom he wished to have some explanations on various matters. On hearing his name shouted, the negro hurried aft, and was heartily pleased to see his young friend. Walter went with him to the long boat, where they had spent so many an evening in interesting conversation, and requested him to take a seat by his side.

"Daniel, I have something to ask you, which you must answer me honestly and frankly," Walter began, as he seized the negro's hand and looked at him with his large bright eyes.

"I will do so gladly, young gentleman, as I would be of service to you in anything. You and yours were kinder to me than any American can be, and I shall never forget it my whole life long. What is it you want me to answer?" the negro replied, with a friendly look.

"Tell me, why do you go to sea instead of earning your livelihood ashore, where you would not be constantly exposed to such peril?" Walter asked.

"I will tell you why it is; because I enjoy better treatment in Captain Beverley's service, and am less exposed to the contempt of the white men than I am in the United States. But why do you want to know that, young gentleman?" Daniel said.

"I suppose you have heard, Daniel, that my uncle has lost such a deal of money by the bank?"

"Yes, and I felt very sorry for him."

"Well, you see, Daniel, my uncle cannot now buy a farm here as he intended, or hire labourers, and yet he must have somebody to help him who is acquainted with the country. We are in an awkward position, and uncle does not at all know what to be after," Walter said, with some embarrassment, and then held his tongue, as if to give Daniel the chance of speaking.

There was a pause. The negro sat for a while, looking down in deep thought, and nodded his head repeatedly. At length he said, as if he had formed a resolution—

"That is, indeed, an awkward position. You are strangers here, and ignorant of the mode of life, and could be easily cheated out of the rest of your fortune. You have treated me as a man, as your equal, and I am sure would have stood by me had I required your assistance. Do you think, young gentleman, that your uncle would not decline my services? I would have gladly have given up a seafaring life long ago, had not the prejudice of the white men against my colour kept me aloof from the land. With you, young gentleman, I would gladly pass the rest of my days."

"My dear good Daniel, my uncle would be pleased if you would live with us, and we should all be very fond of you—I above all, as you know already, Dan," the boy replied, as he seized the negro's hand. "But," he continued, "would not Captain Beverley be sorry if you were to leave him? He was so kind to us, and you must not do anything to offend him."

"The captain, I know, will not like to part with me, but I have already told him that I am tired of a sailor's

life, and would sooner live ashore, if I could meet with a kind good master. He has no objection to it, and has told me that he will not stand in the way of my wishes. If your uncle will take me into his service I will do all in my power to make myself useful to him, and to retain his friendly disposition towards me."

"Good Daniel, in that case you will go with us wherever we go, and nothing shall ever part us again," Walter said, beside himself with joy. "Now I will hurry home and tell my uncle that you are willing to live with us. I have not yet said anything about it, because I wanted to speak with you first. I will come to you again early to-morrow morning."

With these words Walter jumped up, pressed the negro's hand affectionately once more, and hurried with a panting heart back to the inn.

CHAPTER V.

THE START FOR THE WEST.—DEPARTURE FROM MEMPHIS.—THE CARAVAN.—WALTER KILLS HIS FIRST DEER.—A NIGHT IN THE OPEN AIR.—A GIPSY SUPPER.—THE VIRGIN FOREST.—THE INUNDATION.—A NARROW ESCAPE.—THE STAMPEDE.—THE TWO COLTS.

WHEN Walter entered the room he found the same depression and sorrow prevailing there as he had left. Taylor was walking up and down in deep thought, and the others were sitting about silent, and as if resigned to their fate.

"Well, Walter, have you been for a walk?" Taylor said to him, merely to say something, and in passing stroked his curls with his hand.

"No, uncle, I have been aboard the 'Goliath,' and have brought you back first-rate news."

"First-rate, Walter?" Taylor repeated with an expression of melancholy, and looked inquiringly at the boy.

"Yes, first-rate, uncle; Daniel consents to live and work with us. I told him in what a position we found ourselves, and as we have treated him kindly, he has determined to help and stand by us. He is a thoroughly good fellow."

"Is it possible, Walter? why, that would be worth more to us than all the money we have lost; and we owe this once more to you, you good, kind boy, although we are so deeply in your debt already," Taylor said with much emo-

tion, and gave the lad a thankful glance, as he laid both hands on his shoulders.

"No, we must thank Daniel for it, as he is doing it to help us," Walter said, feeling rather confused.

"But without you he would never have thought of it, my dear Wally," Taylor remarked, patting his cheek affectionately. "But have you thought that the captain, who showed us so much attention, may not feel inclined to part with him? we owe Beverley gratitude, and should act unjustly to him by inducing his negro to leave him. We ought never to forget kindness we have received, and gratitude is one of the noblest feelings of the human heart."

"Well, uncle, I mentioned that to Dan, but he told me that he had informed the captain some time ago of his wish to give up a seafaring life, so soon as he could find a kind master ashore. The captain will be no hindrance to him."

"Well, then, be it so, for Daniel's help is a question of life and death to us," Taylor said, as if he had taken a fresh lease of life, and after walking up and down the room several times, seated himself by his wife's side on the sofa. The dim light of the lamp, which had hitherto harmonized with the dull, desponding temper of the family, was now heightened, and the future was discussed with renewed courage and fresh enterprise.

The next morning, directly after breakfast, Taylor met Captain Beverley in the coffee room, and did not delay to inform him of Daniel's resolution, and at the same time to assure him that he would decline the negro's offer if the captain felt disinclined to part with him. But the latter

declared himself quite agreeable, and congratulated Taylor most sincerely on having obtained so worthy and faithful a servant. When he left he promised to send Dan up to Taylor in the evening when he had finished his work, so that he might discuss matters with the negro. Walter, however, paid the latter a visit in the forenoon, and returned to the "Goliath" again at dusk to fetch Daniel. When he entered the sitting-room, and was offered a chair, Daniel at first declined it, because, as he said, it was contrary to the custom of the country for a coloured man to sit down in the company of white people ; but the Taylors explained to him that they knew no distinction between black men and white, and compelled him to sit down.

This privilege rejoiced Daniel's heart, for it was the first time in his life it had been allowed him. He now declared his willingness to enter Mr. Taylor's service, and to remain faithful to him, in good and evil report, so long as the family were satisfied with him. The Taylors, on the other hand, openly expressed the great use that Daniel's assistance would be to them, and assured him they would requite this assistance by their lasting gratitude. After a satisfactory arrangement Taylor began to discuss with the negro the steps he must first take as to settling. The advantages and disadvantages of the various states Daniel was acquainted with were weighed against each other, as well as the means and working strength of the family, and after an hour's discussion it appeared that the South-western territory possessed indubitable advantages over all the rest. Daniel was of the decided opinion that they ought to settle there, although Taylor for the moment

could not make up his mind to expose his family to the dangers that would await them there.

Henceforth Daniel spent several hours every evening with the Taylors, and always adhered, during the discussions that took place about the future, to his previously expressed opinion that the South-west was the best place for the Taylors to settle in in consideration of their circumstances. His thorough knowledge of the country, and his descriptions of its fertility and wealth of pasturage, at length gained the victory, and Taylor resolved to found his new home there.

In the meanwhile the "Goliath" had completed her cargo, and was ready to go to sea again. The Taylors went aboard one morning, to bid good-bye to the captain, with renewed thanks for all his kindness to them. It was a cordial but sad leave-taking; a feeling overpowered the Taylors, as if with the departure of the captain and the vessel the last link that bound them to England was broken, and with tear-laden eyes they saw the sails of the "Goliath" swell and carry her out into the bay. For a long time they stood on the shore, and looked after the ship till it disappeared in the distance; it seemed as if they wanted to thank the captain as long as they could, for leaving them a consolation, a support in Daniel.

The negro now entered on his situation with the Taylors as servant and zealous friend simultaneously. The preparations for the long journey to the West were actively commenced. A large waggon was bought, and so arranged that it could be drawn either by horses or oxen, and a second light cart was purchased for the use of Mrs. Taylor

and the children. Tools and agricultural instruments of all descriptions, as well as the requisite household articles which had not been brought from England, were purchased, and everything carefully packed for transit by railway. Nor were arms forgotten. Three brace of revolvers were bought, as well as two more double rifles, which were precisely of the same calibre as the revolvers; for Daniel considered it a great advantage to use small bullets, because the weight of lead and powder the sportsman had to carry was thus materially reduced.

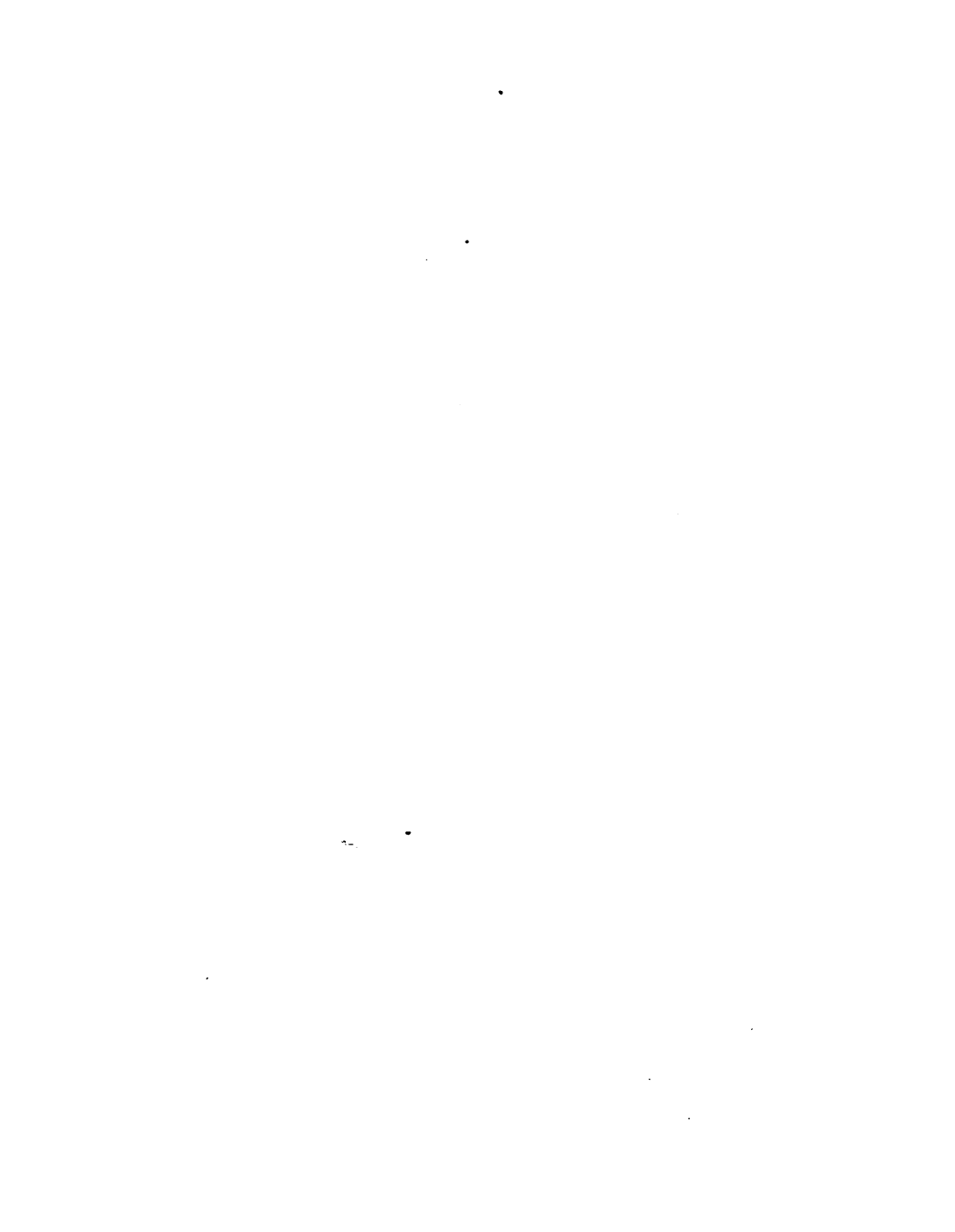
August had arrived, and the Taylors had got all their traps on the railway, and took their places in the train bound for Cincinnati. They took leave of Baltimore with aching hearts: the hopes which had hitherto guided them had been foiled in this city with heavy sacrifices, and they were once again setting out on a long journey to seek a new home. Would they be more fortunate this time? would the dearest wish of their heart, to secure the future prosperity of their children, be at length fulfilled? The train dashed along—the towers and monuments of Baltimore disappeared from the sight of the travellers—wildly romantic gorges, forest-clad hills rose on either side of them—pleasant farms and small towns peered out of wide valleys full of splendid meadows and fields; and the Taylors turned their eyes toward the West with renewed confidence in the support of the Almighty. Cincinnati was safely reached, and, after a short rest, the Taylors went with their belongings aboard a steamer, which bore them in a few days along the Ohio and Mississippi to Memphis.

From this important commercial city the journey had to be continued on land. The carts were put together, three couple of sturdy oxen were purchased for the large one, and two strong horses for the small one, and in addition to the three saddle-horses intended for Taylor, Walter, and Daniel, a spare cart-horse was bought, in the event of an accident happening to one of the others. In a short time everything was in readiness for a start. They were ferried across the Mississippi at an early hour, and Daniel, who was a first-rate waggoner, drove the six oxen in front of the heavy-laden waggon on by a whip from his horse's back. This was followed by the light cart, in which Mrs. Taylor sat with the children, and herself drove. The procession was concluded by Mr. Taylor on horseback, while Walter Arden went at the head of it, accompanied by Pluto, and a little distance before Daniel. Walter's horse was perfectly trained for hunting; it stood motionless when he fired, allowed game of any description to be laid on its back, and never bolted from its master when left to itself. It was a handsome strong animal, of a yellowish colour, with a black mane and tail, and possessed great power of endurance, in addition to remarkable speed.

During the whole journey from Baltimore to Memphis Walter had been eagerly longing for the moment when, armed with his rifle, he would ride through the primeval forests of the West, and he joyfully greeted the cosy gloom beneath the foliage of the giant trees which intertwined their enormous branches into a dome high above his head, like a leafy arcade, supported by the trunks of colossal oaks, cypresses, and planes. The road wound through the



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densely-grown forest, and Walter, in the hope of seeing some game, looked through the tall bushes that hung on both sides over the rarely-travelled road. In his eagerness he spurred his horse on, so that the creaking of the heavy-laden waggon no longer reached his ear.

A profound silence prevailed all around, not a breath of air agitated the foliage or the light gaily-flowering creepers, which hung from the topmost branches over the track, and a sultry, oppressive hot air filled the forest. Suddenly Walter saw, at a distant turn of the road, a golden red patch glistening amid the fresh verdure: it stirred, it must be a stag! In a second Walter leaped out of his saddle, left his horse behind, and crept cautiously from bush to bush, from tree to tree, until he was only a hundred yards from the animal. The latter stood with its head to the ground, behind some tall shrubs, so that Walter could only see a small portion of its body. He did not dare draw nearer, if he did not wish to be noticed. He was standing behind the last bush that hung over the path, and it was impossible to enter the forest at this point, owing to the entangled lianas.

Walter's heart beat so loudly that he fancied the animal must hear it; he found a difficulty in breathing, and he trembled all over from excitement. At this moment the stag raised its head, and, stepping out of the bushes, began driving the flies off it. In a second Walter raised his rifle to his shoulder; there was a sharp crack, and the road was hidden by a cloud of smoke. Walter leapt through it, and looked at the spot where the deer had been standing; but he could see nothing of it, and on reaching the spot itself

he sought in vain for blood. It was the first deer he had ever seen in a free state, and he looked about him in a very melancholy mood, under the conviction that he had missed it. While he was reloading his rifle, Pluto dashed into the bushes, and began barking as he galloped on at a tremendous pace. Walter ran in the same direction along the road, but in a few minutes he noticed that the dog had ceased barking, while the deer was uttering shrill yells of pain. Walter laid his rifle against a tree, drew his hunting-knife, and leapt into the forest in the direction of the cries. He was repeatedly compelled to cut his way through the creepers with his knife, until he saw the deer lying before him, which Pluto had pulled down.

Walter's delight was immoderate, he gave the animal the death blow, dragged it then with great difficulty and exertion to the road, and hurried back to his horse, which he found quietly grazing at the spot where he left it. After completing the loading of his rifle, he led his horse up to the deer, and revelled in the sight of the game he had laid low, till he heard the creaking and rumbling of the waggon. He leapt hurriedly into the saddle and hastened on, so that his friends might be surprised by the result of his shot. Ere long the oxen came up at their slow pace, and the foremost pair stopped in front of the dead deer lying in the centre of the road, before Daniel noticed it. The negro uttered a loud shout, leaped from his horse, and dragged the deer behind the waggon, so that Mrs. Taylor and the children might see it, while Taylor also dismounted in order to look at it and aid Daniel in lifting it on to the cart.

"Walter is really beginning to be our support in the literal sense of the term," Taylor said, half in jest, half seriously; "but what a pleasure it must have caused him to be able to surprise us thus."

"Yes, and how excellently he has shot the deer, the bullet is right in the shoulder-blade; he will make a first-rate hunter some day," Daniel remarked, as he covered the animal over with branches, for the purpose of keeping the flies off it.

Walter had in the meanwhile hurried on in the hope of getting another shot; but, to his regret, the forest soon ended, and the road now ran through open fields and meadows to the little town of Marion. Walter waited for the carts in the shade of the last trees, while he allowed his horse to graze, and was greeted by his friends with shouts of joy, and praised for his master-shot. The sunbeams were now beginning to oppress the travellers, so that Mrs. Taylor and the children were obliged to put up their umbrellas, and Mr. Taylor also made use of one; but Walter endured them without complaining, and thought that a sportsman with an umbrella was too ridiculous. In a few hours the travellers reached, to their great relief, another forest, which overshadowed them without a break, till they finished their day's journey about sunset, on the bank of a prattling stream.

It was the first time the Taylors had ever spent a night in the open air, and though they would have considered this something awful, almost impossible, during their quiet and highly respectable life at the Oziers, it now possessed an almost magical charm for them. Amid the

colossal trunks of the lofty trees, upon which the sun here and there cast its last glowing beams through the dark green masses of foliage, the tent was pitched on the tall luxuriant grass close to the bank of the babbling stream, and the camp fire lighted in front of it, whose flickering light drove back the quickly setting-in gloom for a long distance, and brilliantly illumined the lofty ceiling of foliage, with its wildly intertwined lianas and gay masses of flowers. While Daniel was giving his young master instructions how the deer should be broken up, Mrs. Taylor and Amy were busily and delightedly engaged in preparing the supper at the fire, boiling the coffee, making dampers of hominy, and getting the frying-pan ready in which to cook the fat tender slices of venison which Walter handed them. Taylor had watered the horses at the stream, and now gave them maize in a wooden trough, which was suspended for the purpose behind the cart. The deer was soon broken up, the joints hung on branches near the tent, and the hide was stretched by means of long sticks, which Daniel pointed at both ends, and stuck crossways into the edge of the hide. He put it up in front of the fire, so that it might be dried by the heat and protected from rotting.

Mrs. Taylor now called them to supper, which was served on the lid of a large case in front of the tent ; they all sat down on the grass around it, Daniel joining them by Taylor's express wish. They all enjoyed the meal, for the long day's journey had given them an appetite, and declared they had never made a heartier supper in England. It was a warm, calm night, the smoke and sparks of the

cheerfully crackling fire rose like a pillar inlaid with gold, skywards, and here and there the stars twinkled in the dark heavens through the openings between the motionless crowns of the trees. In the wide circle which the fire-light formed round the bivouac, the long black shadows of the colossal tree-stems trembled in the masses of foliage, and further away in the forest-darkness hovered myriads of glistening insects.

The Taylors, delighted with the beauty of the night, sat for a long time listening to Daniel's stories. He spoke of the immense rolling prairies of the Far West, of the wondrous flower-beds with which they were adorned all the year round, of the crystalline foaming streams with their gold glistening fish, of the transparent blue sky, and the cool breeze, which constantly blew, refreshing and invigorating, over that country. Born among the Indians, he had inherited their lofty sense of the beauties of nature, and his vivid, feeling description of the country, whither he was now leading the emigrants, aroused in them the most enthusiastic expectations.

At length Taylor recommended his people to go to sleep, and went with them inside the tent, while Walter preferred sleeping with Dan in front of the fire. The latter prepared a bed for him in hunter's fashion, spread out his woollen saddle-cloth, gave him his saddle as pillow, and bade him lay his rifle by his side as bedfellow. The night passed quietly and with delicious dreams, such as only sleeping under a clear starlit sky can produce, and the early morn saw them on their westward route again while the leaves were still bending beneath the heavy dew.

For a fortnight they marched in this way from dawn till nightfall, through forest clad, swampy Arkansas, and frequently met with no other sign of civilization during half the day, than what the rough road, made by felling the trees, displayed. At the farms they passed they bought Indian corn for the cattle and horses, flour and potatoes for their own consumption, and now and then received a present of milk, butter-milk, eggs, and butter. Although the soil of these farms was rich and productive, although the dwelling-houses were so snugly and cosily built under the shadow of the thickly foliated primeval trees, it was unmistakably written on the sickly faces of the owners that a cruel foe dwelt among them in the shape of fever, which was constantly generated by the immense forest swamps. The people at these settlements often gazed with surprise, envy, or melancholy at the healthy rosy faces of the English emigrants, and advised them not to delay in this country of the shadow of death. The fever, however, seemed to get no grip upon the healthy constitutions of the Taylors, and fresh and hearty they greeted the first prairie at the western extremity of Arkansas.

The sight of this prairie, although it was only a few miles across, surprised and delighted the hearts of our travellers. The tall undulating grass, the magnificent display of flowers peeping out of it, the cooling breeze that blew so refreshingly past them, formed such a contrast with the monotonous limited view which the impenetrable primeval forest, with its heavy sultry atmosphere, had offered the emigrants for some weeks past, that they felt as if they had emerged from a gloomy dungeon, and

were able to breathe again. Once again, however, the uncomfortable thick forest was to enclose them, and the sun was already low when they rode into it from the higher-lying prairie.

The inhabitants of a farm situated at the other end of the prairie, from whom the Taylors procured some Indian corn, had warned them that they would find in this forest an ugly, dangerous stream, which at the slightest shower rose so quickly over its banks, that it inundated the whole country for many miles round. When the carts entered this forest, heavy storm clouds were chasing athwart the sky, which soon obscured the sun, and were constantly piled up on each other, black and more menacing. Daniel stopped the oxen and inquired whether it would not be better to await the rain where they were; but Taylor preferred passing through the forest on that evening, as it was only a few miles broad. He was afraid lest the waters might rise, and thus possibly prevent them from passing through the woody bottom for days, or perhaps weeks. Daniel now urged the oxen to double speed, and while the Taylors followed him, Walter Arden rode on to examine the road and, before all, the river. The road was only broad enough for one cart, and scarce granted Daniel sufficient space to ride by the side of the oxen; at the same time it constantly grew more swampy, so that the wheels sank in up to the axle. Daniel's shouts and whip, however, hurried the oxen on, and the negro had just recognized Walter some distance off, who was watering his horse at the shallow stream, when the cart passed over the trunk of a tree buried in the mud, and the stout iron pin which held

the front and back part together, broke with a smart snap. Daniel, who immediately saw what had happened, at once stopped the cattle and told Mr. Taylor of the accident, and at the same time pointed to the storm, which was already brooding heavily over the forest. Taylor looked at the waggon in great alarm, for in its present state it could not be moved from the spot. If it were really possible that the water could rise in so incredibly short a time as the farmer had said, the Taylors might expect the flood around them within a few hours, and in that case there would be no chance of saving the cart and its contents. Wherever they gazed at the trees and bushes, they perceived traces of former inundations in the mud, reeds, and small sticks, which the flood had left on them ten feet above the ground, so that such a body of water would cover the carts and probably carry them away. Unable to form any resolution, Taylor was standing with the negro by the side of the cart, when Walter rode up to ask the cause of the delay. On hearing it, he at first also felt very anxious, and looked first at the cart and then at the brushwood floated up to the branches, but then he turned to the negro and said—

“Daniel, you have told me of a sort of wood of which the Indians make their bows, and which is hard and tough as steel. May not this wood grow about here, and could we not in that case make a pin out of it?”

“The wood is found on all the rivers a little further west, and hence it is not impossible that it may grow here. The Indians call it *bois d'arc*, or bow-wood. I will look about for it a little while,” the negro replied, as if with

fresh hopes. He fastened his horse by the bridle to a tree, and hurried, axe in hand, into the thicket.

Walter dismounted too, and ran to the cart to open the chest containing the tools. After throwing several of the latter on to the ground, he crept under the cart, to take a closer look at the damage, and he had been there but a few minutes when Daniel gave a hearty shout in the distance.

"He has found the wood," Walter exclaimed joyfully, then removed the heavy jack, and placed it under the cart, to hoist it up. Taylor helped him by placing a log of wood under the jack, to keep it from sinking in the soft ground, and then both put forth their utmost strength to raise the heavy cart. They were soon so far successful that Walter was enabled to take the broken pieces of the iron pintle out of the hole; and now everything depended on Daniel having found the wood they wanted.

A tremendous clap of thunder at this moment startled them, and warned them again of the danger to which they were exposed. Simultaneously, heavy drops of rain began falling, and a few minutes later the rain descended in a solid sheet of water. But Daniel became visible through the rain with a stout branch in his hand.

"Thank goodness, we are saved!" Walter cried, as he hurried to meet him, and took the wood from him. Then he seized the sharp axe, and began felling the branch, so as to shape a pintle out of it. But the wood was so hard that the job went on very slowly. At the same time the rain poured down so furiously on the ground, that ere long, so far as they could see, the whole surface resembled a lake,

which increased in depth every minute, and was already beginning to flow. Mrs. Taylor had taken refuge with the children in the cart, where the stout tarpaulin protected them from the wet, while the two men hauled the covering tighter over the waggon, and Walter worked away at the pintle.

At length the pin was finished, rounded so as to fit, and Walter inserted it, with Taylor's help, in the place of the iron pin. Then the waggon was let down again, and everything was in readiness for a start. The question now was, whether the piece of wood was strong enough to resist the great pressure that must be put on it, for the wheels had sunk in to the axles. They mounted their horses. Walter rode in front; Daniel shouted to the oxen, and swung the formidable whip over their heads. They dragged at the chains with all their might, and with a terrible creaking and rumbling, the waggon moved on. The water grew deeper at every step, and the current stronger; and when the oxen stepped into the river, the flood rose up to their bellys. The water ran into the large cart, but could not injure the load, because the lower portion of it consisted of articles the wet could not damage. The wheels of Mrs. Taylor's cart were very high, so that the water scarce rose above the step; but for all that, she and the children were terribly frightened during the passage. The opposite bank was, however, reached in safety, and with glad hearts the travellers felt the ground becoming firmer under them. The road gradually ascended—it grew steeper and drier—the thunder no longer pealed so incessantly and fearfully, and the violence of the rain

was relaxed. Here and there the flying clouds soon broke, the blue sky shone through them, and the setting sun threw its gentle beams on the crystalline glistening drops which the rain had left on every leaf, every branch, and every bough. At the end of the forest the Taylors came to an elevation, whence they could survey the bottom they had passed through with so much peril. The whole of the wooded valley was one raging current, from whose white foaming waves the taller trees emerged, and their lower branches sported with the flood. To the west, however, where the sun was now standing over the flat horizon, an immense unlimited surface of grass lay expanded before the astonished eyes of the wayfarers, and they greeted with a glad heart this the first open prairie. The rich juicy verdure of this extensive plain had been refreshed by the rain, and the last sunbeams poured a ruddy glow over the fiery blossoms of the tall cactuses that rose from the grass in the vicinity of the Taylors.

The carts were hauled beneath a clump of primeval matted and thickly frondaged live oaks, and the tired oxen were liberated from their yoke. This day they would be compensated for their long and heavy toil, for they would be allowed to refresh themselves during the night with the tender fresh grass. Daniel had hobbled the two fore-feet of each animal with a strip of untanned ox-hide, so that they were prevented from straying any distance. Then he drove them to graze, and left it to themselves to choose the best pasture. The saddle-horses, on the contrary, were fastened by long ropes to the trees, so that they might graze without going any great distance from camp.

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Taylor had pitched the tent on a stony spot; Walter and the two other boys had fetched brush wood, and kindled it, not without difficulty; and Mrs. Taylor was busied with Amy in getting supper ready. Daniel now came up with a heavy log from a dry trunk of a tree, dragged it up to the flickering fire, and then went off to collect more wood for the night. There was no breeze, but the air was refreshingly cool and pure, and the travellers felt as if with every breath they inhaled twice as much air as before. Night settled down on the extensive landscape; the sky in the west was still glowing with a dark carmine over the black extreme edge of the prairie, and the sky was studded with glittering stars. The Taylors and their faithful Daniel sat in front of their brightly burning fire, over which the branches of the old oaks rustled, and thanked the Almighty, to whom they owed their protection from such imminent peril.

The wet articles were dried at the huge fire, the saddle horses were fastened to the waggon, and Taylor lay down to sleep in the tent, while Walter and Daniel again reposed by the side of the fire.

Day had hardly broken ere all, strengthened by refreshing sleep, rose and made preparations to continue the journey. The saddle horses were again turned out to graze, and the fire freshened up to get breakfast ready. The cattle, as well as the three draught horses, had strayed during the night some distance from the camp, and were grazing in the tall grass. The sun rose glorious above the wooded east, and poured its reviving light over the endless prairie, on which herds of deer were visible at several

spots. The Taylors were seated at breakfast, but constantly looked out over the prairie, as every point upon it aroused their curiosity.

"What is that coming from the skirt of the forest?" Walter asked, suddenly, as he pointed to the wooded valley where it joined the prairie.

"Quick! quick! they are wild horses. Mount at once, so that we may keep them away from our draught horses, or else we shall lose them!" Daniel shouted in alarm, and sprang, bridle in hand, to one of the saddle horses, while Taylor and Walter hurriedly followed his example.

In a moment the three leaped on their bare backs, and galloped across the prairie, to meet the wild horses. The latter, however, had already come too near for the riders to be able to keep them from the cart horses, which, as if longing for the liberty of their wild comrades, hurried to meet them, in spite of their hobbles, with clumsy though rapid bounds. Ere the riders came up with them, they had disappeared in the dense mass of wild horses, which, two hundred in number, now darted in close column through the heaving grass in front of the riders.

"Now, then, ride ahead; if the hobbles do not break they cannot escape us," Daniel shouted, and urged his horse to full speed.

But Walter galloped past him, his was the quickest animal, and he was the first to approach the flying steeds. The earth groaned beneath the hoofs of the wild horses, their long manes and tails flew out, their red, widely-opened, foaming nostrils gleamed like fire, and their large eyes gazed with horror at Walter, who had now caught up

their rear. It seemed as if the animals had hitherto checked their speed in order to protect their hobbled comrades and take them with them ; but when the cream colour with Walter on its back came too close to them, they broke into a mad flight, and left the draught horses far behind, striving to keep up with them ; only one powerful chestnut stallion turned every now and then, galloped close past Walter, and circled with a neigh round the hobbled brothers, as if urging them once again to flight ; but then it shot ahead like an arrow after its flying comrades. The cart horses stopped quite exhausted, but Walter galloped past them, for the delight of the wild hunt was too great for him to give it up already. He drove both spurs into the flanks of his rapid steed, and darted across the prairie in pursuit of the flying horses. Nearer and nearer he drew to the terrified band, whose strongest members went last, as it appeared, to drive on the younger ones, and the chestnut remained even further behind, as if to hold the formidable rider at bay. At this moment two colts became visible in the rear of the tangled mass, a black one and a white one ; their speed relaxed, they grew more and more exhausted, the chestnut galloped around them in vain, they could go no farther, and at last fell, utterly worn out, on the grass. Walter caught them up and checked his horse, and to his great joy saw his friend Daniel coming up at a gallop. They both sprang from their saddles, lifted the exhausted pretty colts on their legs, and patted and coaxed them, although it took a long time ere they recovered their breath.

“I only wish we had a rope, Daniel, to bind them with

and lead them away ; they are such pretty little creatures, and must grow into splendid horses."

"We require no rope, young gentleman," Daniel replied, with a laugh, and pleased at the delight Walter displayed ; "only let them regain their strength, and they will quietly follow our horses. We shall have but little trouble with them, as they are strong enough to feed themselves."

Things happened exactly as Daniel had prophesied. When the colts regained their strength, the couple mounted their horses, and the little orphans followed the latter, as if they were their dams. There was a great rejoicing when Walter and Daniel returned to camp with the two colts. Mrs. Taylor and the children were beside themselves for joy ; they patted the pretty creatures, and Walter made a present of the black one to his brothers, and gave the white one to Amy. Taylor had succeeded in driving the cart horses back to camp, and thus the alarm was converted into great joy. Preparations were then quickly made for a start, and when the party set out, the two colts followed the spare cart horse, which was bound for that purpose behind Mrs. Taylor's vehicle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT CITY OF PRESTON.—CHOCTAW RIVER.—MR. WARWICK.—
BORDER HOSPITALITY.—WALTER SHOOT A BUFFALO.—THE RIDE
THROUGH THE FOREST.—WILD TURKEYS.—THE ALLIGATOR.—THE
PRAIRIE.—SWARMS OF BUFFALOES.

THE glorious prairie now lay expanded before the travellers, the last blue outline of Arkansas forests soon faded away, and they marched over the undulating, grass-covered plains. They had entered the Indian territory to the west of Arkansas, and on the second evening reached Fort Towson, in the vicinity of which they spent the night. The commandant of the division of dragoons stationed here to protect the border settlements from the attacks of the Indians behaved very politely to the Taylors, and visited them at their encampment prior to starting the next morning. On this day they reached the new frontier town of Franklin, where they crossed the Red River, to get out of the country which the United States had set apart as the property of the several Indian tribes expelled from the Eastern States.

The Taylors then encamped on the northern frontier of Texas. From this point the road was only indicated by indistinct waggon trails, and the feeling of drawing nearer to utter desolation, weighed more and more on the travellers. Only rarely did they see a solitary

block-house, till at the end of a week they reached Preston, the last frontier town on Red River. It was called a town, although it merely consisted of a few wooden houses, built under clumps of trees, and connected together by sandy footpaths. Several traders, who kept for sale all the articles required by the frontier men, a tailor, a blacksmith, a cobbler, a surgeon, and a lawyer, with sundry farmers and two hotel-keepers, constituted the population. The dress of these people announced that they lived on the extreme border-line of civilization, as it consisted to a great extent of leather; and the long knives, pistols, and rifles which they carried about with them indicated the proximity of the desert.

Daniel was thoroughly acquainted with this country, as he had often lived here for months with the Indians; but on his last visit to these parts there was not a single house within the distance of a day's journey. Taylor consequently inquired of one of the traders from whom he bought a few trifling articles, how far west settlements extended from the town, and learnt that the last was on the Choctaw River, ten miles off. On inquiring further whether he could buy kine, pigs, and poultry there, he was told that he would find any quantity there, and the people would be very glad if he settled near them. Taylor then continued his journey as far as a stream, where he camped for the night. On the following evening the travellers reached the Choctaw River, on both sides of which a splendid virgin forest extended for several miles. The road through it had been opened by felling trees, and led the Taylors across the clear, rapid stream to the extreme skirt of the forest, where

a settlement nestled in the cool shade of the giant trees. Only the roofs of the houses forming it were visible above a lofty stockade, which was composed of trunks of trees, placed upright in the ground side by side, and surrounded all the buildings. On the open prairie, which joined the forest skirt, many horses were feeding within shot of the palisades, fastened there to posts with long leathern straps, whilst further afield several hundred head of cattle were grazing.

On the approach of the Taylors several dogs rushed out barking, and soon after some men appeared in front of the wooden wall, and gazed in amazement at the new comers. They were the owners of the settlement, Mr. Warwick, his three grown-up sons, and several Americans who resided with him, because they lived *gratis*, had no occasion to work, and amused themselves with hunting and fishing. Mr. Warwick was very willing to have these people in his house, because provisions cost nothing, and they offered him and his family a further protection against the Indians. Warwick had been the first settler in these parts, and had gone through many great dangers here. He was an elderly but still powerful and active man, with a good-humoured and kindly manner. On meeting the Taylors, he greeted them most kindly, and afforded them his utmost assistance and support. The carts were driven close up to the palisades, the horses were picketed in the grass, while the two colts played merrily round them, and Daniel set the oxen at liberty, after fastening a large bell round the neck of one of them, so that he might always be able to hear where they were grazing. The Taylors then accepted Warwick's kind

invitation, and went into his houses, which consisted of several block-houses, standing side by side inside the lofty pallisades. The housewife and her daughters greeted the new comers as kindly as her husband had done, and led them to supper, which was just being served. Daniel was obliged to eat in the kitchen, because the Americans do not allow a negro to remain in their company.

After supper all hurried out of doors, and seated themselves on the grass under an old live oak, in order to enjoy the refreshing evening breeze, which did not seem so fresh in-doors. A peaceful, calming tranquillity lay over the country, only now and then a bird was heard in the tall dark forest behind the house; on the prairie, beneath whose mighty blue horizon the sun had sunk, the herds moved slowly onwards under the guidance of the bell cow, to lie down near the settlement, and the daylight was yielding to the pale shining of the moon, which was standing high in the heavens. The Taylors thought of the lovely evenings at the Oziers, of the pleasant hills of their dear old home; how different everything was here, and yet how beautiful: all they missed was the solemn sound of the evening bells—it was a melancholy thought for them that they should never hear them again.

Warwick, after giving his sons several commissions, turned to the Taylors, and thus diverted their thoughts from the Vale of White Horse. In the first place he fully described the great advantages this country offered the settler before all others; he especially referred to the healthy climate, then to the rich soil, the evergreen pasturage, the abundance of game, fish, and bees, and finally

depicted the great future which awaited this region within a short time, a future which was worth risking something for. He then informed Taylor that all the land on this stream was the property of ten settlers, who were now living on it, and that not one of them, himself included, would sell a foot of it. Twenty-five miles further west, however, there was splendid land on Bear Creek which all belonged to Government, and the person who first settled there would have the pick, and could establish himself exactly to his own liking. Taylor remarked that this first settler, however, would be exposed to very great danger, and that it would be hardly possible for him to hold his own against the Indians with his slight strength.

"All of us on Choctaw River will help you," Warwick interrupted him, "for you see it is to our interest for settlements to spring up there, as they will serve as outposts against the Redskins. That is the custom on the border, one must always be the foremost and endure for awhile the inconveniences of a frontier life ; I lived here quite alone many a long year."

"But you brought more hands with you than I have, and were able soon to build a fort," Taylor objected.

"I arrived here with no other help than that of these two arms, for my eldest son was hardly nine years old. But my wife helped me faithfully, both in working and in fighting ; her bullets often hit the right mark. However, you needn't be frightened, all of us living on the river will go out with you and run up your house and the pallisades, for that is no more than our duty," Warwick replied, and then explained what precautions the borderer must employ

in order to secure himself against the incursions of the Indians.

Taylor next asked whether kine, pigs, and sheep could be purchased at the settlements, on which Warwick offered to supply him at the most reasonable terms. He would let him have as much poultry as he wanted for nothing, as well as sufficient corn for sowing and for the use of the family, till the fresh harvest was got in. This was an old custom on the border, and the settlers on Choctaw River would do all in their power to help their first outpost against the Indians.

Daniel had laid himself in the grass a short distance off, as if awaiting his master's orders, and heard the whole of the conversation. About ten P.M. Warwick took his guests into his house; but Walter declined the invitation, and made his bed with Daniel near the carts, where they lighted a fire. Pluto rested with them as usual, and the two colts were lying in the grass close to them. When they had spread their horse-cloths and blankets, Daniel said:—

“I know that Bear Creek very well, about which Mr. Warwick was talking; the land on it is better and the pasturage much richer than here, for there the pure mosquito grass is to be found; in no other place should we come across so much game either, as on that stream. I will talk about it early to-morrow with Mr. Taylor, for he must move there and have his houses built; we will soon settle with the Redskins, for I am myself Indian enough not to let them best me. That is the place for sport, young gentleman; I have often seen as many as six

to eight thousand buffaloes at once there, and the wild horses there are finer than anywhere else."

"What fun we shall have, Daniel; we will catch the best horses for ourselves. I only wish that I could manage a lasso."

"You shall soon learn that, for I understand it thoroughly," the negro replied, and then told his young friend about the hunts and adventures he had had in these parts while still living with the Indians. But their eyes soon closed, they fell back on their saddles, and the most delicious dreams accompanied their refreshing slumbers.

Early the next morning Mr. Taylor came to them to discuss Warwick's proposition with Dan, and was very pleased to find that the negro so eagerly voted for its acceptance. He resolved to follow his advice, and at once informed Mr. Warwick of the fact. After breakfast, the latter rode out with Taylor, Walter, and Daniel to the herds, in order that Taylor might select the cattle he wished to buy, and Warwick offered to deliver them so soon as Taylor had built his block-house. On the same afternoon, when the sun had lost its power, they mounted again and rode over to Bear Creek, so that Taylor might select the land he intended to settle on. They arrived before sunset, and rode for several miles to the furthest end of the forest, which ran along both sides of the stream. The horses were constantly up to the girths in the finest and richest grass, and on all sides were herds of deer gazing in surprise at the riders. Walter was beside himself with joy at the quantity of game, and only Mr. Warwick's assurance that he should have a shot at a deer that very evening, restrained

him from leaping from his horse during the ride and stalking one.

At length, at sunset, Warwick stopped his horse at a spot where the stream came out of the river with a bend, and ran close along the prairie. Here they resolved to pass the night, so that early next morning Taylor might prospect the land on this side the stream, as well as that on the other. The saddles and bridles were taken off the horses, their fore-feet were hobbled, and then they were let loose to graze on the rich grass. Warwick and Taylor lit a fire near a fallen dry mosquito tree, by which they spread their saddle-cloths for the night's rest; but Walter hurried away with Daniel and Pluto to shoot some game. They had been walking for about a quarter of an hour along the skirts of the forest, when the negro suddenly seized Walter's arm and knelt down on the grass; then he pointed sideways with his hand to intimate that there was game in that quarter. Both got up again cautiously, and Walter noticed a full-grown buck, which had just raised its head in the air, so that its splendid antlers were visible. It was still out of range, and the sportsmen, crept slowly and cautiously nearer, taking advantage of the moment when the deer lowered its head again. At length they got within a hundred yards, and Daniel made a sign to Walter to get still nearer; but the latter was certain of his shot, and raised his rifle to his shoulder to fire, when the negro suddenly dragged him down again and pointed with sparkling eyes to the other side. Both had bent low in the grass, and Daniel whispered to his companion that a herd of buffalo was coming toward them from the forest.

Walter's breath almost stopped through glad surprise, and his heart beat audibly.

"Let them come close, and then aim under the shoulder-blade, but low down, or else the buffalo will not fall," the negro whispered, as he crept close up to Walter ; "take your time, shoot quietly, and throw yourself down on the grass after the shot, so that the buffalo may not see you—here they come !"

With these words Daniel also cocked his double-barrelled rifle, and Walter cautiously rose from the grass. When his eye fell upon the buffaloes, a heavy black gigantic creature was standing forty paces from him, which stood out like a mountain in the bright red evening sky. It was an enormous buffalo bull, which was some distance ahead of the herd ; it had stopped, and was shaking its shaggy head, so that its long mane, which covered all the forepart of its body to the shoulders, flew wildly out. Then it looked at the herd, which was slowly coming up like a black mass.

"Let him come nearer, young gentleman," Daniel whispered, for he saw that excitement rendered it impossible for Walter to hold his rifle steadily.

The buffalo again advanced and then stopped about twenty yards from the hunters ; Walter raised his rifle again, but Daniel said in a hardly audible whisper, "wait till he comes sideways to you."

Walter had thrown away his hat, lest it might betray his presence to the animal, and scarce ventured to look at the latter through the grass ; now, however, the buffalo turned a little sideways with a hoarse roar, and exposed its entire



"Wait till he comes sideways to you."—Page 96.

shoulder to Walter. In a second the latter covered the buffalo.

"Don't fire too high," the negro whispered.

The flame poured out of the rifle, the buffalo roared with a loud cry of fury, and then hurried on, till it fell a few yards from the hunters. The herd, however, dashed up to their fallen leader, and would have infallibly trampled the couple under their hoofs, had not Daniel sprung up and run to meet them with a yell, while he waved his hat high above his head. The colossal animals now fled right and left, while the wounded buffalo scrambled on its forefeet, fixed its flashing eyes on Daniel and strove to rise. At this moment, however, the rifles of the two sportsmen cracked simultaneously, and the buffalo, shot through the heart, fell lifeless on the ground.

Walter's delight was immense when he saw the huge animal lying outstretched before him.

"You hit it very well, young gentleman; your first bullet would have killed it in a short time, but it was better to give it another shot. Your second bullet passed through its heart," Daniel said, as he drew his knife from its sheath.

"That is, if it was not your bullet that passed through its heart," Walter remarked, laughingly.

"No, indeed, young gentleman, I fired a little too far behind; look, this is my bullet," the negro said, pointing to a bleeding wound in the animal's ribs; for he wished to give Walter the pleasure of having killed the buffalo all by himself. He quickly cut the animal's tongue out under the jaw, as his strength and Walter's would not have

sufficed to open its mouth ; then divided the skin over the hump that rose between the buffalo's shoulders, and cut it off.

"This is the best bit about the whole animal. Just look how it is streaked with fat," Daniel said, as he fastened it and the tongue with a cord, and threw them over his shoulder.

"But what are we to do with the rest of the meat?" Walter asked.

"We must leave it as a supper for the wolves ; you will hear what a hymn they will sing over it ; by to-morrow morning there will be nothing left of the buffalo but the bones," Daniel replied.

"But that is a pity," Walter remarked.

"So it is, but we cannot take it with us," Daniel said, and hastened on in front to reach the bivouac by the nearest route.

The last gleam of day had departed, and the moonlight showed the hunters the direction they should take. From a distance they saw the reflection of the camp-fire on the tall dark-green wall of the virgin forest, and when they came nearer, Taylor shouted to them cheerily—

"Well, Walter, have you shot a deer?"

"A buffalo, an enormous buffalo, uncle, twice the size of our oxen," Walter replied, in supreme delight.

"Good gracious, really a buffalo! Well, I must have a look at it to-morrow morning," Taylor said.

"That will not be possible, for Daniel told me that the wolves will eat it entirely up to night," Walter replied, as the negro advanced and laid the booty in the tall grass.

"By Job, that was a fine fellow; you don't always find them so fat," Warwick said, looking at the hump. "I must try a slice of that."

With these words the old gentleman rose, cut a few thin strips of the meat, rubbed them with salt and pepper, which he carried in a box in his bullet bag, spitted them on a stick, and put them in front of the fire to roast. Taylor, Walter, and Daniel followed his example, and enriched with this dainty dish their supper, which consisted of meat and biscuit brought from the house. Warwick also boiled coffee in a large tin vessel, which all enjoyed heartily, though they had no milk and sugar. After supper the three men lit their pipes, and Warwick was telling of the glorious hunts he had so often made on this river, when suddenly a loud, piercing yell broke out, as if issuing from a hundred throats.

"Listen, young gentleman, your buffalo is now being devoured. I will wager that within a short time there will be hundreds of wolves assembled. They are already coming in all directions," Dan said to Walter, and in truth the yells were now audible on all sides.

"I say, Daniel, could we not creep up and shoot one of them? I should like to have a near look at a wolf," Walter asked, listening attentively.

"I should not advise you to do so, my young friend," Warwick interposed; "you might not have much trouble with the smaller prairie wolves, but there are some of the large white wolves among them, and they don't understand a joke. You will have plenty of opportunities of forming an acquaintance with these robbers."

In spite of the constantly increasing yells, the party soon fell back on their blankets, and passed the night in an undisturbed and glorious sleep. Dawn, however, found them engaged in getting breakfast ready, at which the buffalo hump was again attacked, and ere the sun rose above the flat horizon the horsemen were already mounted to survey the country. When they came near the spot where the buffalo lay, they saw a few wolves, which fled on their approach ; but nothing was left of the slain animal save the skeleton.

"That must have been a gigantic buffalo. How much do you think it weighed?" Taylor asked, as he gazed in amazement at the enormous framework of bones.

"It must have been at least eighteen hundred pounds," Daniel replied, and with the words leapt from his horse. "I will remove the horns though, for it is your first buffalo, young master ; and as you ought to have something to remember it by, I will make you a drinking cup and a powder flask out of them."

He then quickly cut away with the small sharp axe, which hung in a leathern sheath from his saddle, the short broad horns from the skull, and galloped with Walter after the others who were trotting on. Taylor gazed in silent amazement, first at the prairie, which was swaying in the fresh morning breeze, and then at the virgin forest, whose trees were two hundred feet high ; never before had he seen such rich and luxuriant vegetation. At the same time the plain was covered as far as the eye could see with exquisite flowers, which filled the air with a delicious perfume. In all directions herds of deer and antelopes

could be seen grazing, and several bands of wild horses were visible. The primeval forest frequently thrust out spurs far into the prairie, and then retreated, forming deep shady bays; here no other axe but that of a hunter had ever felled a tree, and the destroying hand of civilization had not yet injured the primitive beauty of nature. Just as for generations this forest, eternally engaged in growing and decaying, had raised its closely tangled crowns to heaven, it now overshadowed the trunks that had fallen on the ground, and the young saplings yearning to reach the light.

Warwick, who noticed Taylor's amazement, interrupted the silence by saying—

“Come, I did not say too much about this country; it is considerably better than any on Choctaw River. I should have gladly settled here myself, but at that time it was too dangerous, and now I do not care to leave the spot where I have worked so hard. Such land as this is well worth running a little risk for though.”

Taylor now expressed his admiration and delight, and declared himself ready to employ all his efforts in holding his ground here; upon which Warwick repeatedly assured him that he and his neighbours would faithfully support him with advice and action.

For several hours they followed the course of the river on the outer side of the forest, and it was not till the sun became oppressive that they turned into the forest along a buffalo path, in order to pass through it and survey the land on the other side. These western lands are covered with a network of old buffalo paths, and these alone enable

the traveller to pass through the impenetrable forest. The path by which our horsemen entered the forest, ran a long distance across the prairie, and was trampled several feet deep even on the firmest ground, while its breadth only allowed one horse to pass. Warwick rode ahead with his heavy hunting knife in his hand to cut through the creepers, which hung down from the trees over the path and which he could not thrust on one side. Deeper in the forest, however, the wild grape-vines and lianas crossing the road became more numerous, so that the riders were compelled to dismount and lead their horses, in order to imitate the buffaloes, which pass under the creepers in a stooping posture, as was proved by the shaggy hair of the animal hanging from all the thorns and brambles.

The path wound like a serpent between the enormous trunks, the lofty leafy arcade grew ever denser, and the plants that rose out of the black *detritus* became more luxuriant the nearer they drew to the river. The gaily-flowered lianas twined from tree to tree, from branch to branch like garlands, hung lightly and gracefully from the greatest height, or clung round the vine branches, that rose and sank like gigantic swings. Frequently the enormous trunk of a fallen tree barred the way, so that the riders had to fetch a compass round it, and here and there one of these monsters of the vegetable world was swinging among thousand trailers which had checked it in its fall, and by which it pulled down its neighbours to it. Only at times a sunbeam crept through the thick tree tops, and glistened on the silvery grey stem of a magnolia, or on the whitish yellow trunk of a plane tree; but the light was no

sufficient to dispel the pleasant semi-obscure of the forest. A pure, wondrously refreshing cool breeze filled the forest, and the cosy silence and tranquillity were only interrupted by the brawling of the stream, which hurried to join the Red River, over its rocky bed, which was thirty feet deep.

"How different it is in these forests from those in Arkansas," Walter said to his uncle, as they took off their hats and let the fragrant fresh forest breeze play round their foreheads.

"The forests here have no standing pools, no swamps such as there are in that country, and hence there are no malignant fevers," Taylor replied; "and we cannot sufficiently thank our gracious Father for guiding our footsteps hither. See, Walter, what we often regard in life as the greatest misfortune, what we think we cannot endure, what makes us despair, after a time we find to have been the best thing for us. Had we found my Cousin Albert still alive when we came to America, we should have doubtless settled near him, and perhaps many of us would have shared the same fate that carried him off so prematurely. Had we not lost the money in the bank we should never have had our faithful and dear friend Daniel, and without him we should have probably never seen this splendid, healthy country. Hence, Walter, whatever may happen to you in life, let it be ever so harsh and despairing, never give up the conviction that God will direct it to your welfare."

The sight of Bear Creek, which the riders now reached, interrupted Taylor's remarks, and with the utmost surprise he and Walter gazed at the rapid stream, which was so

clear and transparent that they could see every stone, every fish, every turtle at the greatest depth, and had it not been for the motion of the stream, it would have been difficult to say whether there was water in the river-bed or not. The admiration they gave to the glorious stream was, however, suddenly directed to something else, which claimed the attention of all four horsemen. Pluto at this moment put up several hundred wild turkeys from the bushes on the river bank, and the thundering rustling of their wings startled the horses. The birds flew straight up like rockets, and settled on the topmost branches of the lofty trees. The gentlemen at once gave their bridles to Daniel, and hurried with their rifles in various directions through the thicket, in order to approach the trees on which the enormous birds were sitting. Walter followed the barking of Pluto, who sprang into a small clearing round a gigantic cypress and, looking up, gave tongue furiously. On the immense branches which the tree stretched out far across the creek, some twenty turkeys were sitting, and looking with their outstretched necks at the barking dog. Walter soon reached the tree, shouldered his rifle, and with the crack of the shot a huge cock bird fell from the branch and fluttered into the stream. Walter ran to the bank, to send Pluto in after the bird. The latter drifted on with the stream, lashing it with its wings, and Pluto now noticing it, leapt off from the steep bank to bring it ashore for his master. The current carried them both rapidly away, but Pluto continually drew nearer to the bird, and had almost reached it in a bend of the stream, when a large alligator suddenly shot out from under the bank,

appeared on the surface of the water in front of the dog, and opened its fearful jaws to seize the bird.

Walter, who had followed along the bank, scarce noticed the hateful creature ere he aimed his rifle at it and fired a bullet into its scaly back. The alligator, however, would not be robbed of its meal, but seized the turkey with its cruel teeth, and disappeared once more under the bank. Walter had called his dog out of the water with fear and terror, and looked angrily at the spot in the river where the robber had disappeared, and which was marked by rising mud. At this moment Taylor and Warwick came up to the lad, each with a turkey he had shot, and learnt from him the misfortune that had happened to him. At the same time he looked sadly at the two fine birds which the gentlemen had killed, and said in conclusion—

“That such a misfortune should happen to me!”

“Say rather good fortune, Watty. Only think if the alligator had seized your dog instead of the bird, and carried it off, would not that have been far worse? Moreover, a man must not always calculate on the success of his enterprise; have you so soon forgotten how lucky you were in your sport yesterday?” Mr. Taylor said affectionately to Walter, and patted his cheek, whereupon the latter heartily shook his uncle’s hand, as if thanking him for the reproof.

They now walked back to Daniel along the bank, and mounted their horses again, while the negro fastened the two birds to his saddle-bow. The buffalo path was trodden very deeply into the bank, so that it led with a gentle incline to the stream, whose bottom could be distinctly seen.

"Hold up your rifles and powder-flasks so that they may not get wet when the horses sink in the water," Warwick said to his guests.

"That will be hardly necessary here, for the water will not come up to my saddle," Taylor said, as he looked at Warwick in surprise.

"Don't make any mistake," the latter said with a laugh, "the water here is at least ten feet deep, and it is easy to be deceived by its clearness. I will ride first to let you see how deep it is."

With these words he drove his horse into the water, when it at once sank up to its head with the heavy man on its back ; but it came up to the surface again directly, and bore its rider in a few instants to the opposite bank. Taylor, who followed him, sank up to his arm-pits on first going in, but Walter, whose weight was less, was hardly wet up to the waist. By Warwick's advice, however, the rifles, powder-horns, and bullet-pouches had been protected from the wet.

"It was deeper than I thought," Taylor said, looking at his feet, on which the wet poured down in streams from his clothes ; "I am really wet through."

"You must grow used to that on the border," Warwick remarked, giving himself a shake ; "it does no harm in this climate ; you will be dry again in half an hour."

"We could not venture to remain in wet clothes in England, for we should be laid up," Taylor observed.

"You need be under no alarm about that, the bath will do you good. Let us now ride on, the forest is not very broad here, and the sun will soon dry us on the prairie,"

Warwick answered, and made his horse push on, wherever the creepers allowed it.

At the end of a quarter of an hour an opening was visible some distance ahead of the riders in the thick dark masses of trees, through which, as through a gate, the path led to the sunlit prairie. When Warwick reached this opening, and his horse was going out into the open plain under the wide-spread branches of a centennial oak, he suddenly checked it and said, as he turned to his companions—

"Now, Mr. Taylor, you shall see buffaloes. I have not noticed such large herds for a long time past. Look across the prairie; all those black dots as far as you can see are buffalo herds."

While saying this, he pointed with his hand to the boundless plain. Hardly a hundred yards from the forest a herd of at least a thousand buffaloes was grazing, and apparently paying no attention to the others further on; for when the four riders came out of the forest, the animals raised their heads from the grass and looked in wonder at the strangers, while here and there the herds started off in a clumsy gallop. So far as the eye could see, the prairie was alive with these colossal animals, and among some of the herds bands of wild horses, or deer, or antelopes could be noticed feeding.

"No one runs the risk of dying of hunger here," Warwick said, noticing the amazement of his guest. "It would be an easy matter for us to dash into one of the herds and kill a dozen of the creatures. The pasture here must have a special attraction for them, as when no game

is to be found far and wide around, it is never absent here."

"Shall we not ride in and kill a brace of buffaloes?" Walter said, as he looked with sparkling eyes at the motionless animals before him.

"It would tire our horses, and take us away from the real object of our tour," Warwick objected.

"And we should derive no benefit from killing the animals, as we could not take the meat with us; never kill any creature for the mere sake of killing," Taylor remarked kindly, and Walter was obliged to be satisfied, though he would have liked to give the reins to his horse.

They now rode out into the prairie, and followed the skirt of the prairie, while the herd of buffaloes, which had gazed at them in such surprise, suddenly broke into a gallop, and hurried after their companions.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SETTLEMENT.—THE HUNTED BUFFALO.—THE WOLVES.—A SNAP SHOT.—AXING THE WAY.—BUILDING THE FORT.—THE HORSE-THIEVES.—THE PALISADES.—THE TAYLORS LEFT ALONE.—THE CANOE.—THE MILL-WHEEL.—CLEARING THE FIELD.—A NEW WAY OF FISHING.

THE country offered the travellers for several hours the same aspect: on their left hand rose the glorious virgin forest, like a lofty green wall, and on their right lay the prairie, whose other end died out in the misty distance. Before them there now rose, however, at the extreme edge of the prairie, a forest which ran down from the west to Bear Creek, like a blue cloud, and which Warwick stated to be the wood covering the banks of Plum Stream, so called from the enormous quantity of wild plums growing there. This stream ran for a distance of several leagues through the prairie, and eventually flowed into Bear Creek.

In the afternoon the riders reached the wood, which concealed the stream in its deepest shadow, and was several thousand feet broad at this spot, where it joined Bear Creek forest. A buffalo path, which the hunters had been following for several hours, led them right into the wood, and they soon reached the beautiful silent bright stream, which rushed noisily into Bear Creek, close by. The stream was not unjustly called Plum Stream, for at the spot

where the riders watered their horses the banks were everywhere covered with plum-trees, that spread their branches, covered with splendid blue fruit, far across the stream. It was not deep, hence the riders could pass under the hanging branches, and make a hearty meal of the plums. Their clothes had become quite dry again, and the cool refreshing perfumed breeze that played round them here in the dark shade of the forest, which was closed over their heads, was most pleasant after the long ride in the burning sun. When they had rested themselves and their horses, they once more followed the buffalo path, which led them out on to the prairie on the other side of the forest, and then ran along Bear Creek. Here Warwick checked his horse, and turned to Taylor with the words—

“Look here,” Mr. Taylor, “this is the lot of land which I should have so gladly chosen for my settlement, and which I now recommend to your notice. In that angle where the Plum Stream forest joins the Bear Creek there is the richest soil that I know far and wide. Only look what splendid grass and gigantic plants grow here; the sunflowers are several feet above our heads. In this corner here, I thought, you should have your arable land, and a few thousand yards further on, where the Bear Creek comes out of the forest and enters the prairie, would be a capital spot for your house. Let us ride up, so that you can take a look at it.”

With these words Warwick rode on through the tall grass, which came up to his saddle, and soon halted with his comrades on the steep bank, thirty feet in height, beneath which the Bear Stream dashed impetuously onwards.

The spot where they stood was a mound, raised at least fifteen feet above the rest of the bank, and hence affording an extensive view of the flat prairie. On the top stood several thickly-frondaged red elms, which overshadowed the hill, and on the slope leading to Plum Stream a fresh cool spring gushed out from among some rocks. A little further on, and about a hundred paces from the hill, the Bear Stream again entered the forest.

"You have here all the advantages you can desire," Warwick went on to say to Taylor; "you survey the whole prairie; you can take the spring at the foot of the mound inside your fence; these splendid elms offer you the most glorious shade; down there, where the stream enters the forest, you have on this side as much wood as you can require; and you can plough up as much land as you like from there to Plum Stream. Moreover, you have in this brook a water-power sufficient to turn any sort of mill-wheel. For my part, I could not wish for a more suitable or pleasant locality."

"It suits me, too, in every respect, and I feel deeply grateful to you, Mr. Warwick, for bringing me here. In God's name, then, I will found a new home for my family here, and may He graciously protect me and grant me the strength to attain my object!" Taylor replied, and offered his hand to Warwick.

"And you can trust to us on Choctaw River at any moment, we shall be good neighbours to you," Warwick said.

"It is rather a scattered neighbourhood," Taylor said with a smile; "but for all that it will be a comfort to me."

"Be of good cheer, you will not remain here long alone. Other settlers are safe to come into these parts, and we will not harbour them on the Choctaw, but send them all on to you," Warwick made answer; and then added, as he turned his horse down hill, "we will now take the first buffalo-path through the forest, so as not to reach home too late."

He rode with his companions along the bank to the spot where the river emerged from the wood, and then followed the skirt of the forest for about half an hour till he came to a deeply-trodden buffalo path, which led out of the prairie into it. Daniel rode last, and was just going to turn into the forest after Walter, when he cried to the latter—

"Stop, young master, dismount quickly, perhaps you can shoot a wolf; here comes a whole pack of them after a buffalo. Quick, quick!"

At the same moment he got off his horse, led it into the forest, and seized the reins of the cream-colour, while Walter leapt down and stepped behind the last tree on the prairie. A loud yell, which now reached Walter's ears, drew his glance towards the prairie, where he noticed a buffalo galloping on at a tremendous pace. It was only slightly in advance of a pack of wolves that was in pursuit of it. They rapidly came nearer, the yells continually grew louder and more furious, and ever greater grew the buffalo's exertions to reach the forest. It was coming in a straight line toward Walter, and following the path, as it seemed. Its flanks were covered with foam, its fire-red tongue hung out of its mouth, and the earth groaned beneath its

awkward, but very rapid leaps. The wild pack at its heels had all but caught it up, and parted with savage barks on either side, in order to attack it on the flanks. There were at least forty of the little prairie wolves, but in front of them galloped an enormous white wolf, which at this moment reached the buffalo with its jaws widely open. But at the same instant Walter fired, the white wolf turned head over heels, the buffalo dashed on one side towards the thicket, and the pack of wolves flew in all directions. Walter leapt behind the tree, aimed at a flying, glistening black wolf, and as the flame poured out of the barrel, it also rolled over on the grass.

"All respect for your shooting, my young friend," cried Warwick, who had ridden into the opening of the forest; "where did you learn that? the oldest frontier man must take off his hat to a sportsman who can fire two barrels so quickly." Then he turned to Taylor, and said—

"The Indians will gladly keep aloof from such shots as those; the boy will be a valuable support to you."

"Indeed, he has been so often enough already, for which I owe him many thanks. He is a most excellent lad," Taylor replied, as he looked down at Walter, who was standing over the white wolf, and seeing where he had hit it. He smoothed the handsome white skin with his hand, and then cried to the negro—

"I say, Dan, shan't we take the skins?"

"If you wish it, young master, I will strip them off in a minute; but they are summer skins, on which the hair is not so good as in winter," the negro remarked.

"Oh, well take them, as we can turn them to some use," said Walter, as he began to reload his rifle.

"All right," Daniel cried ; he quickly hobbled his horse, left it to graze with Walter's, and then set to work skinning the wolves. He performed the operation with the utmost dexterity and agility, hung the two skins over his saddle, leapt on his horse's back, and followed his companions into the forest.

The sun had just set when the riders reached Warwick's settlement, where they were received with great joy. The two splendid turkeys and the buffalo tongue were handed over to the lady of the house, and the two wolf-skins were hung up during the night before the fire which Walter and Daniel kindled for themselves. On the following morning Warwick rode to all the settlers on Choctaw River, and invited them to help in building Taylor's house on Bear Creek. Two days later the latter and his family took leave of the Warwicks, in order to reach the terminus of their long journey, in which Warwick and some twenty men accompanied them. Although there was no way or track to Bear Creek, they passed without any great difficulty through the prairie to the forest, but here they were compelled to halt, as the vehicles could not go along a buffalo path. A fire was lit under a shady oak on the forest skirt, at which Mrs. Taylor was to prepare a meal, while the men were engaged in cutting a road with their axes. Walter of course was not absent, and swung his axe like a man. Warwick was the leader of the party, and sought to give the road the direction to a spot on the river, where the bank was not very steep and the water

shallow. All the larger trees were left standing, the road being made to wind through them, and only the saplings and bushes were cut down close to the ground. The work went on very rapidly, because Warwick selected the clearest spots for the road, as it was of less consequence to choose the shortest route, than to make it with the least trouble.

At the expiration of a few hours the road was completed as far as the river, after which the men returned to Mrs. Taylor to refresh themselves with dinner. They, however, only allowed themselves a short rest, and then hastened back to the river to complete their task. The earth on both banks was smoothed down, so that the waggon could go in and out of the stream without any great difficulty, and then the men led the road further through the forest towards the prairie on its west side. The sun had not set when they had completed their job and returned to the carts, to which the animals were quickly put, and set in motion to traverse the forest. Only a good driver like Daniel could have made this journey, with the long team of three yoke of oxen, as the windings of the road between the trees were often very sharp. All went well, however, and the parting light of day was still pouring from the inflamed evening sky over the darkening prairie, when the travellers came out of the glowing forest, and greeted their new home with rejoicing hearts.

Not far from the spot where the road left the forest was the hill selected for the settlement, and the party set out for it. With a hearty "Thank heaven," Taylor dismounted, and "the Almighty be praised!" said his wife, as he lifted her out of the vehicle, and full of hope and confidence in

the future, pressed her to his breast. The tent was speedily pitched near the spring, a fire lighted before it, another fire was blazing on the top of the mound, where the men from the Choctaw camped, and all the saddle and draught animals were grazing with hobbled feet in the tall, juicy grass which covered the ground near the bivouac. With feelings of great delight Mrs. Taylor this evening set the pots, pans, and cans among the glowing embers; she was preparing the first meal in her new longed-for home. With fervent thanks to God the Taylors closed their eyes late at night, while the Choctawians were lying as carelessly round their fire as if resting in the lap of civilization. Walter Arden and Daniel had arranged their beds by the tent fire, and Walter was lying on the white wolf's skin. The sleepers lay so motionless, that the fires gradually expired, and there was not a sign of life in the whole camp. The horses and oxen had also lain down on the grass, to recover from the day's toil, and the rustling of the stream alone interrupted the silence that lay over wood and field. The moon stood high in the heavens, and the close-growing elms cast their black shadows over the careless sleepers. All at once Walter rose, for he fancied Pluto had been growling. He opened his eyes, and convinced himself that he was not mistaken, for the dog was sitting up, and now growled again, while looking steadfastly in the direction of the horses, which were lying at the foot of the mound. Walter sat up and looked carefully at the animals; all at once he fancied that he could see a dark object slowly moving through the grass a short distance from them. At one moment he fancied he was mistaken, but then

again he thought he distinctly saw a movement there. He gently nudged Daniel and woke him without making a noise.

"Daniel, I see something moving in the grass over there, behind the horses; is it some wild beast?" he whispered to the negro; and the latter rose on his arm, and gazed for a time fixedly at the indicated spot. Then he said—

"They are not wild beasts, but wild men—Indians, who want to steal our horses. Take up your rifle. We will give them a fright."

"It is much too far though to fire," Walter whispered.

"But when they get near the horses, it will not be too far. I will tell you when it is time to fire."

"But my aunt will be alarmed, Dan. I will tell her we are going to fire."

"Make haste then, and do not get up; crawl on your hands and knees to the tent. You have not a moment to spare; the fellows are coming up fast," Daniel said, and Walter glided through the tall grass to the tent.

He returned in a few instants, and crept with equal caution to Dan's side, who whispered to him—

"Look there, young gentleman, over the two foals, something is moving—there must be several Redskins together. You can now see them, as the grass is not so high: there are really three or four of them. Fire, for it cannot be more than a hundred yards; but mind not to hit a horse. Now give it them."

The shot was scarcely fired ere six human forms leapt out of the grass behind the horses, and fled with the speed of a deer over the brilliantly moonlit plain.

"Send the other bullet after the scoundrels," cried

Daniel, and Walter fired again. The Indians, however, merely doubled their speed, and soon disappeared in the mist.

The crack of the first shot had aroused the sleepers; all seized their guns, and when the second shot showed them where the foe was to be sought, they also recognized the fugitive Redskins, and fired a volley at them, although they were a long way out of range.

"The villains have at least heard lead whistle, and will not come back in any hurry: the guns cracked more often than they expected," Warwick cried in his passion, and added, as he shook his fist at the Indians, "Wait, my fine fellows, you will leave blood yet on Bear Creek."

Taylor, too, had hurried out of the tent at the first shot, and Daniel was obliged to explain the whole affair to him.

"Let us mount and follow them," several of the men exclaimed, but Warwick objected:—

"We can save the ride. The villains have by this time reached the thicket on Plum Stream, where they had their horses concealed, and we might look for them for a precious long time. They will not return so soon; twenty bullets are more than they like."

Taylor proposed to fetch the horses from the grass, and fasten them close by; but Warwick assured him that it was now unnecessary to take such a precaution. He advised going to sleep again, and was the first to stretch himself on his saddle-cloth by the freshly-kindled fire.

The night passed without any disturbance, and dawn summoned the men again to work. Mrs. Taylor and Amy

quickly made coffee, baked cakes, and cooked bacon, the breakfast was swallowed, and Warwick led his companions down to the stream at the spot where it entered the forest again. Here the men began to fell trees, in order to erect the houses and fence for the settlers, out of their trunks. A large cypress was also cut down, and pieces two feet long sawn out of its trunk, which Daniel dragged to the hill with a couple of oxen. These pieces were split into thin broad planks, which were to be employed as shingles in covering the houses. So soon as a considerable quantity of trees had fallen, Walter also fetched a couple of oxen and dragged the logs to the hill, as Daniel was doing. For four days all the men laboured indefatigably, and on the fifth they had as much wood lying round the mound as was required to establish the settlement. They next turned to erecting the block-houses; two trunks twenty feet in length were laid on the ground parallel to each other, at a distance of fourteen feet, and fastened together by two other trunks sixteen feet long, on the ends of the first two, so as to form a quadrangle. In this way more logs were continually laid on each other, until the four walls of a block-house twelve feet high were formed. Three of these houses were raised side by side and ten feet from each other, and all three were covered with one shingle roof, so that the two intervals between the houses were also under shelter. After this, doors and windows were sawn in the wooden walls, openings were also cut in them where the fire-places were to be, and chimneys were run up from them, composed of wood, clay, and stones. The doors and shutters were made of split cypress wood and hung on

hinges, which Taylor had brought with him. When the houses were finished on the top of the hill under the shady elms, the men began making the palisade fence. A trench two feet deep was dug all round, and into this trunks of trees were placed close together in an upright position, and covered with earth. The wall thus formed was fourteen feet high, and all the interstices between the trunks were filled up with wood. The entrance of the stocade consisted of a strong gate, which could be secured inside with heavy chains. In addition, a fence was put up a short distance from this palisade, inside which the milch-cows could be shut up at night and the calves during the day. This completed the works which the Choctaw men had undertaken to carry out for their new neighbours, and on the fourteenth day they took leave of the latter and wished them all happiness and prosperity in their new enterprise. Warwick promised to deliver the kine Taylor had purchased almost immediately, as well as the promised maize and poultry, and to look in pretty frequently to see how he and his were getting on.

With very sad hearts the Taylors watched the men disappear along the newly-cut path through the forest. They felt as if they had bidden good-bye to all human society, as if they had taken leave of the rest of the world. They were alone in a desert, which was only inhabited by savage animals and hostile savage men, and an uncomfortable feeling oppressed them at the thought that from the West to the Pacific no white man had ever erected his cabin before them. The more yearningly, therefore, did their hearts turn toward the few settlements on Choctaw

River, which were now their only support, the sole link between them and civilization.

For all that, though, Taylor was far from desponding; the thought that he was acting for the benefit of his children steeled his will, and the feeling that he could now be active on their behalf gave him courage and confidence in his own powers. At the same time he felt supported by the lengthened experience, fidelity, and devotion of the worthy negro, as well as the assistance of Walter.

The first foundation of the settlement was laid; the Taylors had a roof and a shelter against a first attack of the savages; the real labour, however, of converting this spot into a home must now begin, and the settlers set about this heavy task with all their energy. The first thing they undertook was laying out a garden. This was done close to the fort on the river bank, so that the spring water, which rose inside the palisades, ran through the garden to the stream. In a few days Daniel had fenced in a small piece of land for this purpose, and dug it up with the help of Taylor and Walter. Beds were at once made, and sown with peas, beans, melons and gourds, cabbages and turnips, in which job Freddy and Charley lent a hand. When it was completed on the fourth day, and they were going back to dinner, Warwick drove up in a light cart, and brought in it the promised maize, fowls, and a pig, while two of his sons drove up the purchased cattle. The delight of the settlers was great, because the reappearance of their friends gave them an assurance that they were not deserted. The calves were shut up in the enclosure intended for them, while their mothers were left at liberty,

as it was certain that they would return to their young at night. The fowls were left to roam inside the fort, and some food was given them ; the sow was also kept there, and to store the maize Daniel quickly ran up a small house of light stems, which he covered with shingles. Warwick was greatly surprised when he entered the block-house, for in one of the rooms he saw chairs and tables, which Walter had made out of empty cases ; the openings between the trunks were filled up with bits of wood, and the walls were hung with large cloths, on one of which glistened a looking-glass in a gold frame. On the wall opposite the door hung all the fire-arms neatly arranged, as well as the saddles and bridles, and everything was neat and clean, and testified to the tidiness and industry of the lady of the house.

The three neighbours were invited to sit at the table, and heartily welcomed at the simple repast.

"You Europeans at once settle down comfortably wherever you may go, while we Americans only keep an eye on profit, and forget even our comfort and pleasure," Warwick said, looking round with a pleasant smile, and then fixed his eyes on the handsome weapons on the wall.

"God bless me, with those you could defend the fort against an army," he exclaimed in surprise ; "there are no less than sixteen guns, and in addition lots of revolvers and pistols ; you really have no occasion to be frightened about the Indians. When I first came to Choctaw River I had no weapons beyond a single rifle and a bowie knife. For all that, though, I recommend you the utmost caution, for the Redskins are cunning as wolves, and as ferocious

as the most savage brutes. But Daniel is tolerably well acquainted with them, and knows how far they may be trusted."

"There shall be no want of caution," Taylor remarked, "nor of brave opposition, if the Indians force it on us."

"You would do better by not letting them force you to defend yourselves, for then it might be too late. Lay it down as a rule to regard every Indian as a beast of prey, and to kill him where and how you can, for he is nothing else, and deserves no other treatment," Warwick said, somewhat hotly, as the flush that covered his face showed.

"That would not be quite right," Taylor objected; "they are human beings after all, who display hostility to us whites because we seize on land which they regard as their property. I really cannot feel angry with them because they will not patiently endure being driven out."

"Certainly, they are human beings," said Warwick, "that cannot be gainsaid; but they are savages, only intended for the desert like the wild beasts, and they lose their claim to the land wherever civilization makes its appearance. The earth was surely not created to remain a desert for all time. Why then do not the Redskins settle down and lead a peaceful, honest life? in that case no one would expel them from their legal territory. Believe me, the first shot is always the best; I have ever adhered to that, and could not have held my own on the Choctaw in any other way."

The conversation during dinner constantly turned on the savages, it was Warwick's favourite theme, and with a certain degree of pride he described a number of hostile


meetings with the Indians, in which he had been the victor.

Daniel had not sat down at the table, through fear of offending the kind neighbours by his presence. Mrs. Taylor, however, sent him his food and coffee by Amy into the other house, where he employed an empty chest as a table.

When the sun was beginning to set, Warwick and his sons bent their steps homewards with assurances of the most neighbourly friendship, and Taylor hastened to the farm, in front of which the kine were waiting to be let in to their calves. The former were milked by Mrs. Taylor and Amy, and shut up inside the fence, while the calves were driven into the grass, to feed there till twilight; for they dared not leave them out at night. The housekeeping department was greatly enriched by the quantity of milk the cows yielded, and Mrs. Taylor managed to make use of it in various ways.

The next job that was undertaken was to make a canoe, and for this purpose a mighty poplar was felled. A piece of the trunk twelve feet in length was planed on the top and slightly hollowed out, after which Daniel kindled a fire in it, and kept it in a constant glow. In this way he burnt the trunk hollow, so that he had but little more to finish with the axe and chisel. Then he cut the trunk externally into the shape of a boat, placed a couple of seats in it, and it was soon floating lightly on the bright waters of the Bear Stream.

At a spot no great distance from the foot of the mound the bank sloped gently down to the river, so that the



horses could be watered there, and here the canoe was fastened by a chain to a tree. While Daniel was completing the boat, Walter was performing an equally useful operation; he made a mill wheel and attached it to a small raft in such a manner that the strong current must turn it. He connected the barrel of the wheel with a large iron maize mill, which Taylor had purchased in Baltimore, and which produced far more flour than the settlers required. They were thus spared the very fatiguing task of grinding it daily for the consumption of the family.

After finishing this job, Walter set about making a plough, all the iron work of which they had brought with them. Taylor and Daniel, in the meanwhile, set themselves a heavy task in turning a portion of the forest into a field. The forest soil can be easily ploughed, and produces a splendid crop in the first year, while a field made on the prairie does not bear full crops till the third year. The larger forest trees were left standing, but were barked for a breadth of several inches, which must infallibly kill them by the next spring. The saplings and bushes were cut down and piled up round the large trees, in order to burn them there, so soon as they became dry enough. The field was then fenced in, and as by this time Walter had finished the plough, the soil was turned up for the first time, to lie fallow during the winter and be sown in the spring.

In addition to these chief operations, the settlers carried out innumerable smaller ones, which were partly compulsory, partly for greater comfort, partly for amusement. Thus, for instance, Daniel fastened a stout cord across the stream

to two young trees. On this cord he bound several short fishing lines, so that they hung down in the stream, and a bell as well, which was to inform them when a fish was caught and tugging at the line. Whenever Mrs. Taylor wished to have fish, the hooks were baited with meat, and it was never long ere the bell rang, and they put off in the canoe to fetch the captured fish. This stream was marvellously populated; it was all alive with fish, many of which attained a weight of thirty pounds, and it was a wonderful sight to watch them in the sunshine displaying all the colours of the rainbow. The splendid turtle which lived in the stream often weighed as much as fifty pounds.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEAR-HUNT.—A BOLD SHOT.—GETTING THE BEAR HOME.—THE JAGUAR.—THE TURKEY TRAP.—STEALING A CALF.—ALARM OF THE FAMILY.—THE TRACKER.—AN EVENING IN A BACKWOOD SETTLEMENT.

ALTHOUGH Walter toiled indefatigably the whole day, and eagerly seized every opportunity to make himself useful, the hours of dawn and the evening were his own, and he employed them in following his favourite amusement—sporting. Daniel was always his companion, when he had the time for it, and together they traversed, sometimes the forest, sometimes the prairie. In these excursions Daniel always allowed his young friend the first shot at the game, and only sent a bullet to his help when Walter did not kill or else missed. The negro was a wonderfully fine shot, and his quickness in using the rifle was equal to that of his hawk-like eye. Walter was often so surprised at it that he loudly expressed his admiration, which Daniel always greeted with a laugh, and said that it was a reminiscence of his Indian life. One evening, after the day's work was done, they rode out before sunset into the prairie, to try and kill a deer. On this day, however, they came across no game, and hence half angrily turned their horses toward the end of the forest at Plum Stream, which ran for a long

distance into the prairie, where its line could be clearly marked by very tall poplars and cypresses.

Twilight was already settling down on the plain when they reached the point of the forest, and rode along it for the purpose of returning home. Here the trees stood singly, so that they could see some distance through the forest, as the ground was merely covered with low grass, and only a few bushes grew on it. Daniel was telling his young companion about former hunting adventures, and the latter was listening attentively, but for all that allowed his eyes to wander over the forest. Suddenly he stopped his horse, and whispered to Daniel—

“What is that under the oak—don’t you see a black point?”

“A bear, I declare: it hasn’t seen us yet. Make haste—jump off and stalk it; the wind is favourable.”

In a second Walter was off his horse’s back, and leapt in a stooping position from tree to tree. The bear was looking for acorns, and standing with its head turned away from Walter. The boy rapidly drew nearer, and had got within one hundred yards of the bear, when he stepped on a dry branch, whose breaking and snapping startled himself. He threw himself down; but at the same moment the bear sat up on his hind-quarters, and looked toward Walter. The latter, however, had already pointed his rifle at it, and fired. The bear ran away, and Walter shot the second barrel after it, though without checking its flight.

At this moment Daniel dashed past him on horseback, under the trees, toward the dense forest, to cut off the bear’s retreat in that direction, and Walter’s horse galloped after

him with clattering stirrups. In vain did Walter shout to his horse; it followed its comrade, and the couple soon disappeared from sight, near the edge of the forest. As the bear had turned aside on seeing the negro and the loose horse, Walter listened to the chase, whose direction was marked by Daniel's whoops, and began to reload his rifle, feeling rather annoyed at the thought that his comrade would kill the bear without him. Again Daniel's wild whoop echoed through the forest, at no great distance. Walter looked up and saw the bear running towards him with tremendous leaps under the trees. It was coming straight at the lad, who had just put the bullets in the barrels, and pulled out his ramrod to drive them home. Could he finish loading ere the furious animal reached him?—that was the question that troubled him. With all his force he drove one bullet down the barrel; the bear was now only fifty paces off. Then he drove home the second, threw away the ramrod, and felt for his caps. At this moment the bear was within twenty yards of him, and uttered a savage roar. Walter cocked both barrels, shouldered, and in a second the bear tumbled over. The next moment, however, it rose again on its hind-legs, and stretching out its fore-paws toward its enemy, advanced upon him, gnashing its teeth. Walter did not stir; he looked firmly along the barrel at the bear's head, fired, and the furious monstrous animal fell dead at his feet. Daniel came galloping up at full speed, and uttered a loud shout of delight when he saw the bear topple over, for he knew the danger to which his young friend was exposed; but it had been impossible for him to follow

Master Bruin in a bee line, because the latter had taken refuge among a number of rocks, which he had been compelled to ride round.

"I congratulate you, young gentleman. This is your first bear, and a fat fellow he is, weighing at least eight hundred pounds," Daniel exclaimed, as he leapt from his horse, and tapped Walter on the shoulder. "You did that cleverly. I was greatly afraid lest you might lose your head, and run for it. The brute would have caught you up in a few minutes, even if you had climbed up a tree. These black bears climb like cats, while the grey or grizzly bears are unable to climb. But now let us hasten home, for we must fetch the carcass to-night, or else the wolves will be at it."

With these words Daniel took off his jacket, and threw it over the game, and Walter followed his example. Then the negro fastened Walter's white pocket-handkerchief to a bough, so that it might float over the animal, and they galloped across the prairie to the settlement, which they reached at dusk.

The news of their success caused great joy in the fort, for Warwick had told the Taylors of what use a bear was in housekeeping at this season. The cart in which Mrs. Taylor had made the journey was got ready. Daniel laid in a stock of splinters to use as torches, lit several of them, and rode in front of the cart, which Walter drove. Across the prairie they got on pretty well, although at times a fallen mosquito tree or a ditch, formed by the rain torrents, stopped them for a short while; but when they entered the forest they met with repeated obstacles, and the old

stumps which projected out of the ground, gave the cart many an unexpected and violent jolt. Daniel, however, was too well acquainted with life in the desert not to be certain of his object, and he soon shouted merrily, "I can see your handkerchief fluttering; I hope the wolves have respected it."

The bear lay exactly as they had left it. They drove the cart close up to it, although the horses at first refused to go near an animal they feared so much, and then arrangements were made to lift the bear into the cart. By the help of ropes and levers the two sportsmen at length accomplished this, although with the utmost exertion, and then they commenced their return journey. There was something gruesome about this drive, for the night was pitchy dark, and the torches only lit the nearest objects; the black smoke of the pine wood formed a cloud round the cart in which the dead monster lay, and in all directions the unceasing whining yells of the wolves could be heard. Daniel rode silently in front. Walter followed in equal silence, while both held their rifles in readiness for immediate use. At length, however, they could see the dark outline of the palisade standing out against the night sky, and Taylor came out of the fort with a torch in his hand. The cart passed triumphantly through the gate, where Mrs. Taylor and the children were waiting to have a look at the slain animal. The bear was now canted out of the cart, and saluted with a general cry of admiration. They examined it from all sides, and sportsman Walter received immense rudes.

"But why did you not paunch the animal at the spot

where you killed it? then you would have had a much smaller weight to lift into the cart," Taylor asked, as he surveyed the bear's gigantic proportions.

"Because we should have lost the finest and best fat. The fat which lies among the bear's entrails is so delicate that it melts between the fingers while still warm, and it would have been a pity to lose it, as it furnishes a magnificent oil. We will let Master Bruin lie quiet till the morning," Daniel said, as he removed the traces from the horses and led them to the palisade, where they were tied up with the others during the night.

Soon after the family were assembled, and heartily enjoying their supper.

"Daniel, shortly before you came back, something must have happened among the kine; all at once they began lowing fearfully, and ran about the enclosure like mad things," Taylor remarked to the negro.

"It may have been a panther, or possibly a jaguar, for those gentry will cause us a great deal of trouble. Before I let the cows out to-morrow I will look about and convince myself what it was; for we cannot allow such visitors," the negro replied.

At this moment the loud angry lowing of the kine again became audible, and Daniel leaped up, seized his rifle, called Pluto, and hurried to the gate. He opened it quickly and stepped out, followed by Walter, through the darkness to the cattle pen, in which the cows were dashing about furiously. It was impossible, however, to notice any object, hence Daniel and Walter fired off their rifles, uttered a loud shrill yell, and set the dog on. Pluto

sprang out barking into the darkness, but returned almost immediately, and everything became quiet, for the cows had grown calm again.

The night passed without disturbance, and when morning broke, Daniel went to the cows, to look after the nocturnal visitor. He soon found the track of a large jaguar, which had been sneaking round the fence, but had not dared to spring among the irate cows. Daniel followed the track and found that it came from Plum Creek. To find the jaguar's den there, however, without a trained dog was impossible, and they must, therefore, content themselves with laying watch for it, if it paid another visit to the fort.

Daniel next set about skinning and cutting up the bear, and stretching out the magnificent hide to dry. With the greatest surprise the Taylors regarded the back of the animal, when stripped, for it was covered with a layer of fat six inches thick; the inside of the animal was equally rich in fat, and Mrs. Taylor's storeroom received a useful addition in the shape of first-rate oil.

After breakfast Walter and Daniel proceeded to the forest behind the newly-cleared field, to carry out a design they had long meditated. They wished to make a trap to catch wild turkeys, countless flocks of which haunted this forest, because there were numerous pecan-nut trees there, whose fruit they are very fond of, while it makes them nice and fat. On a clearing in the forest Daniel built a hut, by sticking young saplings into the ground in a circle, fastening their tops together, and then wattling thin staves through them. This hut was six feet high, and so close that it was hardly possible to thrust one's arm between the

saplings. Daniel then began excavating a path some distance off, which gradually became deeper near the hut, so that there was a cavity about two feet deep leading into it under the basket-work, and the path rose again inside. The saplings, under which this path ran, were fastened together by their ends with withies. Daniel then strewed maize, which the turkeys are very fond of, along this path and into the centre of the hut. If the birds in picking up the corn follow such a path and enter the hut under the wicker work, they never find their way out again, as they raise their heads and run round and round to find a way out of the hut, but never dream of stooping and going out by the way they came in.

The job was finished in a few hours, and Daniel hoped to have some captives the same evening. Walter could scarce wait for sunset, when he would return with the negro to the trap; but he worked very busily all day at a job which he had undertaken by Daniel's advice. He made a long strong ladder, which was intended to reach from the steep bank inside the fort to a rock which emerged from the stream lower down. It was a precautionary measure on the part of the negro, in the event of the savages ever attacking the fort, when the ladder would enable its occupants to make their escape. The rock in the stream could be easily reached by it, and then they could cross in the canoe to the forest on the opposite bank, through which Daniel had cut a footpath to the waggon road. Up to this time, it is true, no Indians had again been seen, but Daniel said that was a reason why the family must be more on their guard against them. While Walter

was busy with the ladder, Taylor and the negro drove long iron nails, the heads of which they had filed off, into the top of the palisades, so that if the Indians ever made an attack, they would find it more difficult to climb over them.

In such and similar tasks the day was spent, and then Walter gladly laid aside his tools, and put on his hunting accoutrements. Full of expectation, he hurried with Daniel down the hill and toward the forest where they had built the trap. They walked into the wood, and had not gone far when a tremendous rustling and flapping reached their ears.

"By Jove, there are some inside, don't you hear them flapping their wings?" Walter shouted, and leapt into the thicket, Daniel following him at full speed.

They soon reached the hut, and noticed five enormous turkeys in it, running about with outstretched necks, and flapping their wings as if they wanted to fly away.

"I'll show you the way, my beauties," Daniel said, as he drew his knife, and Walter also ran up to the hut knife in hand. They then thrust their arms through the trellis-work, and cut off the captives' heads, after which they drew them out on to the path and strewed fresh maize. They were fine cock-birds of extraordinary size, each of them weighing above fifteen pounds. Daniel fastened three of them by the feet, and threw them over his shoulder; Walter did the same with the other two, and off they went homeward.

About this time the Taylors were sitting on a bench near the gate in the palisades, and resting from their day's

toil. It was one of those gentle, pleasant evenings which November frequently offers in these southern countries. The cooling and invigorating breeze blew over the tall, heaving grass of the prairie, out of which the autumn flowers raised their rainbow-hued heads; the sun had reached the distant flat horizon, and its last beams fell on the Bear Creek forest, whose dark green was already mingled with gold and crimson, and interwoven with the bright red leaves of the creeping plants; silvery herons and pink flamingos were floating over the virgin forest, and rising in the departing sunbeams to the crowns of the cypresses, which spread their mighty arms across the impetuous stream, and the whip-poor-will cried its own name in a melancholy and plaintive note through the depths of the forest.

Taylor and his wife were sitting in silent admiration and holy contemplation of the natural beauty that surrounded them, and thanking with humble hearts the Creator of all this glory for the mercy He had shown them in leading them to such a spot.

"How wondrously all has turned out for the best!" Taylor remarked. "Providence evidently sent our excellent Daniel as a friend in need; what could we have done without him! How cleverly he sets about everything, and how kindly he instructs Walter. Whatever the two set about they succeed in. I wonder whether they can have caught any wild turkeys!"

"Good gracious, look at that animal, it is leaping over the fence among the calves," Mrs. Taylor cried at this moment in horror, and Taylor rushed, shouting, "a jaguar, a

jaguar," into the fort to fetch his rifle. But ere he returned the savage brute had pulled down one of the calves, seized its neck in its tremendous mouth, and bounded with it over the fence. In spite of the shrieks and shouts of Mrs. Taylor and the children, it did not leave go its prey, but fled at long leaps through the grass towards the forest, while the calf was uttering the most heart-breaking sounds.

Taylor returned with his gun, but only in time to see the robber resting for a while and then continuing its flight. At the same time the kine came rushing up from the prairie with a terrific lowing to assist the complaining calf, whose lamentations, however, soon ceased, as its murderer disappeared with it in the forest.

The Taylors had been obliged to look on sadly at the whole scene, unable to do anything to prevent it, and the children cried about the loss of the pretty little calf, and would not be comforted for a long time.

"It will be a lesson to me never again to leave the fort without my gun," Taylor said; "how easily the Indians could have surprised us here. People grow too easily indifferent to danger. Go into the house, and I will wait at the gate till our two hunters return; I hope they will not be long."

Dusk soon set in, and ere long the two heavily-laden sportsmen came marching up the hill.

"At last. I have been longing for your return," Taylor said to them, and at once told them what had occurred during their absence.

"That is lucky," Daniel remarked; "it certainly costs us a calf, but now the jaguar must die too. It will not

devour the whole of the animal to-night, and is safe to come back to it to-morrow; we will wait for it then."

"Yes, yes, but who knows whither it has carried the calf, it ran off with it as easily as it were a hare," Taylor objected.

"It may run as far as it likes, but I shall find it; I was once the most renowned tracker among the Indians, and they did not give me my name in vain," Daniel said with a flashing glance, as if seized with a sudden enthusiasm.

"What was your name, then?" Taylor asked. The negro, however, evidently regretted what he had said, and replied with some embarrassment—

"They called me The Tracker."

With these words he threw the turkeys from his shoulder and dragged them after him towards the fort, saying—

"We have brought the mistress five splendid birds; our trap proved first-rate."

"Why, Walter and Daniel, you are excellent hunters; you bring so much meat into the house that we can scarce consume it," Mrs. Taylor said on noticing the five fat birds. "I have salted the bear meat, as you advised, Daniel; but now you must make arrangements to smoke it, so that it will keep for the winter."

"I will do so to-morrow morning, after we have found the calf. I will build a sort of smoke-house, so that we may always have a stock of dried meat; for we do not know whether the Indians may not prevent us some day from getting fresh game," the negro replied.

"Do not frighten me, Daniel. Heaven, I trust, will protect us from any such terrible crisis," Mrs. Taylor said;

and after begging Walter to hang up the turkeys outside the house, she went to get supper ready.

After the meal, when the fort was closed, the colonists sat snugly round the large table, engaged over different tasks. Mrs. Taylor and Amy had their needlework before them. Taylor and his two sons were husking maize in readiness for grinding the next morning. Walter was making cartridges with rather smaller bullets than those he usually shot from his rifle, in order to be able to load more rapidly in a case of need, and Daniel was at work on the horns of the buffalo Walter had killed, making him a drinking-cup and powder-flask of them, according to promise. He had also retained the bear's two large tusks, out of which he intended to make a powder-guage and a whistle for his young friend. The guardianship of the fort was entrusted to Pluto, which duty he faithfully performed by lying in the centre of the enclosure, listening to every sound outside of it, or taking a walk along the palisades.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JAGUAR TRAIL.—THE MURDERED CALF.—TURTLE CATCHING.—A PLUMP IN THE WATER.—THE AMBUSH.—THE JAGUAR.—THE ROTTEN TREE.—A LUCKY SHOT.—DRESSING SKINS.—PRACTISING WITH THE LASSO.—THE SKUNK.

THE night passed quietly, and day had scarce dawned ere Daniel awoke his young friend, and the couple put on their hunting accoutrements in order to go in search of the stolen calf. Taylor let them out of the gate, as he always did when they went out together. Daniel now followed the track of the jaguar, which could be easily seen in the trampled grass. Ere long they reached the wood, where a few broken plants, or the trodden ground on which the beast of prey had placed its paws, must serve as sign. The negro did not appear to have the slightest difficulty in keeping the track, even when Walter could not distinguish a sign of it. Daniel, however, frequently stopped and showed his friend the insignificant marks he was following, and taught him how to notice them. The track ran in a tolerably straight line through the bushes, as it seemed, toward the spot where the Plum Stream fell into the Bear River. The jaguar, however, had not deemed it necessary to carry its quarry so far, for the two hunters suddenly stopped before the lacerated calf, the entire side of which

its assassin had devoured. The remains lay in a thicket formed of thorns, creepers, and tall weeds, and was hidden by the foliage of the surrounding trees, whose branches hung down to the ground.

"This is an awkward place to lie in watch, for we cannot think of firing here, and the jaguar will perceive us sooner than we do him. We must see where he has gone, and wait for him on his return," Daniel said, and looked on the ground to find the jaguar's track. Suddenly he stopped and said—

"After filling its stomach, it went away from here yesterday evening, and returned this morning. Probably, we have just startled the brute. Here is a track which leads to the Plum Stream, and two coming back from it, one of which is quite fresh. Now, the jaguar is safe not to come during the day, but all the more certainly in the evening. We will, however, be here soon enough. Let us follow this fresh track, till it leads us to an open spot in the forest, where we can look about us."

With these words Daniel walked on in a stooping posture, and carefully examining the ground, and Walter went cautiously after him. After a while the negro halted and looked round him on the ground.

"Where you are standing the trail is clearly marked on the moist ground, but here I miss it," he shouted to Walter. "Do not leave that spot, and I will make a wide circuit round you, by which I shall be sure to find the continuation of the track."

He had only gone a short distance to the right of Walter, when he cried—

"Come here, the fellow has passed across this clearing, and here he must die too. A more favourable opportunity to lay wait for him unseen could not be desired."

When Walter reached Daniel's side, the latter pointed to the ground in front of him, and said—

"Look here, it has recently passed across here, and you shall hide yourself to-night in the bushes in front of that old oak. I will wager ten to one that it comes back this way. We will now hurry back to the calf, however, and follow the other trail, so that I may select a spot for myself; for it is possible the jaguar might return by that route."

Soon after Daniel followed the other track, which turned more to the right, with the same certainty, and selected on it a wide open spot where he would station himself in the evening. It was a few hundred yards distant from the one Walter had chosen, and separated from it by an impassable thicket. After the hunters had carefully examined the spots, they returned home, but in passing took a look at their trap. To Walter's great delight there were two turkeys in it, which were soon killed and pulled out.

"Now, we will close the trap, and not open it again till we require game," the negro said, and stopped up the entrance with bushes. Then he took some handfuls of maize out of his pocket, and strewed them on the path, so that the birds might grow used to look for food here.

The hunters returned to the fort with their fresh game, rather fatigued, and Mrs. Taylor regaled them with bear's paws for breakfast. After a rest, Daniel went with Mr. Taylor to build a smoke-house, which was formed of slight

branches and covered with shingles, while Walter took his rod to try and catch a turtle. For this purpose four large fish-hooks were fastened together back to back, so that the points stood out on all four sides. When these are fastened to the line, a piece of meat is bound a few inches above them, and the whole affair is let down into the water. The turtle seizes the meat with its two fore-paws, with which it holds it tight in order to nibble it. If the line is then smartly pulled up, the hook must catch in one of the creature's paws, and it is captured.

No great distance from the fort the stream made a very sharp bend in the forest, and the stream, which was extremely powerful, had undermined the bank. The water was very deep, and Walter knew this spot to be a favourite resort of turtle: hence he hurried there and dropped his line in. He had not been standing long on the edge of the steep bank and watching the movements of the floating cork, which the eddy in the bend carried round in a circle, when he felt a tug at the line. There was another and more violent tug, and then the cork was pulled down. Walter at once drew the line up, but soon felt there was a very heavy weight attached to it; it must be a large turtle which was going down with the stream, and pulling furiously at the line. Walter held his rod with all his might, but at the moment he slipped with both feet, and tumbled sheer into the water. He sank to the bottom, but rose again at once, and instead of reaching the surface, found himself below the excavated bank amid a myriad of roots, which hung down from it in the water. Still, he did not lose his presence of mind, but recognized his position at

a glance, sank to the bottom again with open eyes and rose once more to the surface. With a few powerful strokes he reached the opposite low bank, on which he landed, and at once looked round for his rod, which he saw floating along about one hundred yards down the stream. He ran along the sandy bank, plunged into the water again and brought his rod ashore. Then he carefully pulled the line in, and in spite of the turtle's resistance, managed to land it. It weighed nearly forty pounds, and was one of the soft shelled ones, which boils to a jelly and is very tasty. He bound his line round it and then dragged it behind him through the wood to the bank facing the fort, where he shouted to Daniel to fetch him across in the canoe. Walter's appearance at first caused his friends alarm ; but then they had a hearty laugh at his adventure, in which he joined. All, however, rejoiced in anticipation over the famous soup which Mrs. Taylor promised to make of the turtle next day. After Walter had changed his clothes, he helped in building the smoke-house, till the sun began to set, and warned Daniel that it was time to go to the forest and lay watch for the jaguar. On this day the hunters provided themselves with a revolver in addition to rifle and knife, and though Taylor was unwilling to let Pluto leave the fort, he was obliged to give his consent for this occasion only.

The sun was still rather high over the distant edge of the prairie when the two sportsmen reached the spot in the forest selected for Walter. He arranged himself a seat in front of the oak, and put some branches on the ground before him, so that he might be better con-

cealed from the jaguar's searching eyes. A root of the oak grew some distance out of the ground, and formed a cosy seat for Walter, while the trunk served him as a support for his back.

"Do not make any hurried movement, not even with your eyes, for the jaguar is certain to examine the clearing before it steps out of the thicket. Keep your eye fixed on the point whence the track comes, for it is sure to arrive from that direction," Daniel said, when Walter had taken his seat, and Pluto was concealed behind the root. "Do not be in a hurry, but take plenty of time to fire. If the animal stands still, aim at its head; if it goes on, aim behind the shoulder-blade; and if it should spring at you after you have fired, set the dog at it, and then you will find a good opportunity to drive a second bullet through its head. Before all, remain calm and cool-blooded. I will now go to my post, and one of us will be sure to see it; I hope it will be you."

With these words the negro hurried noiselessly through the bushes, and soon disappeared from Walter's sight.

A solemn silence reigned in the forest, not a breath of air blew, the most delicate creepers, which hung down like delicate cobwebs from the highest branches, did not stir, and the slightest sound, such as the fall of a fruit or the hopping of a squirrel, could be heard for a long distance. With each moment the scene grew more quiet and solemn, for the birds ceased singing, and only a cormorant raised its croaking cry at intervals on the river. The last sunbeams, which here and there stole through the thick foliage, and played with dazzling brilliancy on the trunks

of the trees, died away, and the dusk of evening quivered through the forest with the reflection of the sea of fire on the western sky. Walter sat motionless and merely looked from time to time across the clearing, and then fixed his eyes again on the spot where the jaguar's track emerged from the thicket. There, the moist ground was covered with luxuriant plants, whose blood-red flowers gleamed in the deepest shadow of the evergreens hanging thickly over them, and out of their dense masses of leaf hung the snow-white feathery two-foot-long blossoms of a variety of the magnolia, called "old man's beard." Walter was delighted by the play of colour amid the dark verdure; but suddenly one of the white pendant flowers moved, as if the bush on which it hung were being shaken by something. With compressed breath and firmly-held rifle, Walter gazed at the gloom beneath the thickly-leaved branches, and once again a white blossom hanging over the foremost bush stirred.

Every nerve, every muscle in Walter, was drawn tense, his eye seemed trying to penetrate the deepest gloom. At this moment the blood-red flowers parted, and the gold-yellow, black-spotted form of the king of these forests, the jaguar, moved noiselessly between them. It stopped, and with eyes glistening like live coals surveyed the clearing. Walter already had his rifle at his shoulder when the first golden gleam was visible among the red blossoms, and he looked along the barrel at the spotted head of the royal beast.

At the moment when it stopped, Walter pressed the rifle more firmly to his shoulder, kept the sight motionless at the animal's head, and fired. The thunder echoed

through the forest, and the powder smoke rolled in a thick cloud over the clearing, but Walter had noticed that the jaguar was hit.

"Seize him, Pluto!" he shouted to the dog, and leapt through the bushes before him, rifle in hand. At this moment he saw the jaguar bounding across the open glade toward the thicket.

"Seize him, Pluto!" he shouted again to the dog, who had already reached the thicket, and was pursuing the jaguar. Walter, too, leapt into the bushes in great excitement, and forced his way through them, until a fallen tree barred his progress. At the same time he heard on the other side of it Pluto's voice, and perceived that he was engaged in a desperate battle with the furious foe. At one bound he reached the top of the tree for the purpose of leaping over it; but the bark gave way under his feet, and he sank up to his chest in the tree, which was as rotten as tinder. He saw that the jaguar had his dog under it, and tried to get out of the tree to help his faithful animal, but at this moment the terrible foe noticed him, and turned with widely-opened jaws from the dog to him. Walter pointed his rifle at it, with the consciousness that he would be lost if the bullet missed. The jaguar, however, had only taken one forward leap ere Pluto seized it again, and buried his teeth in its hind-quarters. The animal darted round with a wild roar to assail the dog, but at this moment Walter fired, and the bullet passed through the skull of his savage and dangerous enemy.

At this moment Daniel tore the bushes asunder, and leapt out of them with cocked rifle. The tiger lay dead

at his feet, and Pluto was standing over it, and giving vent to his fury by shaking it between his teeth.

"Thank heaven!" the negro said, looking in surprise from the dead jaguar to his young friend, who had laid his rifle in front of him, and was trying to get out of the tree.

"In heaven's name, though, how did you get into the tree?" the negro shouted, as he hastened to help Walter out of his prison.

"I fell into a trap, Daniel, and had not Pluto, the faithful old dog, interfered at the right moment, I should probably have fared the same as the calf. The brute leapt furiously at me," Walter replied, laughing, and walked gleefully up to the jaguar.

"That's right, Pluto, give it him, my good old fellow; seize him, worry him," he cried, as he stooped down to the dog and threw his arms caressingly round him.

"Friend Pluto, though, has got several unmistakeable marks; look here, he is bleeding terribly from the shoulders and the neck too; the long wound on the shoulder was produced by a claw," Daniel remarked.

"Yes, and the monster would have killed him, had I not come up, for he was lying underneath, and defending himself as well as he could. When the jaguar noticed me in my trap, it left Pluto, and turned on me; but the good dog seized it, and I had the time to fire."

"And a master shot it was, right through the skull. Did you miss it with the first barrel? for you fired twice."

"Oh, no! I must have hit the first time, for it stumbled. Still I did not fire certainly, as I aimed at its head."

"The rifle shook; here is the bullet hole; it passed

through the neck," Daniel said, as he pulled back Pluto, and pointed to the wound.

"Yes, Daniel, I confess it, my heart beat terribly, so that I could hear it, and I had a dizziness before my eyes. The next time, though, that I fire at a jaguar I will behave better. Still I was not frightened," Walter said, and turned the handsome animal on its stomach, that he might admire the arrangement of the black spots on its back. When Walter caught hold of it, Pluto at once dashed at the enemy again, but his master pulled him back with the words—

"Let it alone, it is dead, and you will injure its handsome skin," at the same time he patted the dog, and turned to Daniel—"What will you do with these fangs?"

"Nothing at all, for I intend to preserve the entire skull for you; we will bury it in an ant-hill. The ants will gnaw away the flesh very cleanly, then we will lay it in the sun to bleach it, and hang it up by a nail over your bed. You will often remember your shot with pleasure. But now I must really make haste to remove the skin, ere it grows too dark."

With these words the negro leant his rifle against a tree, drew his knife, and began to skin the jaguar. Walter assisted him, while Daniel showed him what to do, and cautioned him against cutting the skin. It was stripped off up to the head, which was cut from the body, and the job was completed by the time that night set in. Daniel threw the hide over his shoulder, and took up his rifle, while Walter returned to the jaguar, saying—

"I will take its claws as a reminiscence." He quickly cut them away from the paws, put them in his game-bag,

and followed the negro, who walked sure-footed through the darkness to the skirt of the forest. On the road they were caught so continually among thorns and brambles, that their face and hands were bleeding when they reached the prairie.

"To-morrow I will tan some deer-hides, so that we may make ourselves leather clothes. We shall look beautiful objects when we reach home," Daniel said, as he hurried toward the forest, which stood out like a dark wall against the star-gemmed sky.

"Here is the robber's coat," Walter shouted triumphantly, when Taylor opened the gate and let in the two hunters.

"Really now," Taylor said, agreeably surprised, "I had great doubts whether you would succeed in killing it. But come in, for the others will like to see it."

Walter had taken the skin from the negro and proudly carried it into the room, where he spread it out on the ground.

"That is an enormous skin, it is over six feet long," Taylor said, as he gazed at it in amazement.

"And how splendidly it is marked, and how smooth and shiny the hair is," Mrs. Taylor remarked.

"He won't fetch any more calves," Walter said, and then described the chase.

"But you exposed yourself to a great danger, Walter dear; how easily the animal might have injured you. You must really be more cautious, you are too daring," Mrs. Taylor said, affectionately, as she stroked the boy's long tangled curls.

"It is right to be daring, but the necessary caution and reflection should accompany it," Taylor remarked; "if

you had been cautious in getting on the tree you would have been able to give the jaguar your second bullet unseen, and you would not have fallen in."

"But, dear uncle, who could imagine that the inside of the tree was nothing but powder?" Walter objected, and now showed the claws he had cut off the animal. Then Pinto was called in and had his wounds examined, for which Mrs. Taylor rewarded him with the remains of a deer's leg.

"But, Walter, what a state you are in; your coat is hanging in rags about you," Amy said, when he drew near the light; "did the jaguar do that?"

"Oh, no, it did not get near me enough for that; the thorns did it, when we came through the wood in the darkness," Walter replied, as he walked up to the looking-glass, and surveyed the numerous holes in his coat, through which his white shirt peeped out.

"I will tan some deer-hides to-morrow, of which we will make clothes, for no other stuff will stand hunting excursions. My jacket too has been in the wars this time," the negro said, and left the room with the words, "I will go and lay the hides of the last two deer in water, so that they may get soft."

He soon returned and sat down to supper with the family. When the meal was over, each went to work again, and Daniel finished the powder-flask and drinking-cup, which he handed to Walter when they rose to go to bed. Both horns were very neatly worked, and afforded Walter an immensity of pleasure. He heartily thanked the kind negro, and only hoped he should find an opportunity for repaying him.

The next morning Daniel fetched the deer-skins from the river, and called Walter, that he might show him in what way they should be prepared. He had for this purpose preserved several deer heads; he also cut the jaguar's out of its skin, and took the brains out of all the skulls. He mixed them in a vessel with water into a thin broth, and after laying the skins on a board, and removing with a scraper all the fibres and hair, he rubbed them with this solution, folded them several times, and laid heavy stones upon them. He treated the jaguar's hide in the same way, except that he left the hair on. He left them lying thus till the next morning, then washed them clean in the river, and hung them up in the shade. Before they were quite dry, however, he took them down to rub them dry. For this purpose he placed a broad plank in the ground, whose projecting end was sharpened and rounded off at the sides. On this sharp edge he laid a skin, and drew it over it from one side to the other, employing all his strength to stretch the fibres as much as he could.

The skin was thus rendered very supple and soft, especially after Daniel had rubbed it quite dry between his hands. The leather was now ready, and as soft and white as any tanner could make it. But it had to be smoked, so that it might not shrivel up and become hard when wet. This Daniel effected by digging a hole two feet deep in the ground, the top of which was the size of the skin. He then lit a fire in the cavity, threw a quantity of rotten wood on it, so that it merely smouldered and produced a deal of smoke, and stretched the skin tightly over it, by fastening it down with wooden pegs. From time to time

he raised the skin, in order to add more wood, and left the leather to be smoked in this way for twelve hours, at the end of which time it had a beautiful golden-brown colour, and was prevented from ever growing hard. Mrs. Taylor cut two jackets out of the leather, one for Walter and one for Daniel, and gave them to Amy to make up. In the same way trousers were soon made for the two hunters, so that they would not be so greatly plagued by the thorns during their excursions, and Amy also made suits of the same material for Charley and Freddy. The jaguar skin was Walter's delight, it served him henceforth as a saddle-cloth, and afforded him through the short close hair, which distinguishes the tiger from the leopard, an equally safe and cool seat.

Taylor was daily busied in teaching his two boys the use of fire-arms; he made them fire at a mark, and they had a shot at any game that came in the vicinity of the fort. Both boys soon shot very well, both with the rifle and the revolver, and had already killed several head of game. Walter on the other hand, practised, whenever he had the time, the use of the lasso, a rope thirty feet long, made out of a buffalo hide, with a noose at one end.

The act of using the lasso consists in throwing the noose over an animal's head from the distance of the rope's length. Walter practised on lifeless objects, but at times Charles and Fred had to represent the game, and galloping after them he frequently succeeded in throwing the noose over their heads, which always caused great fun. Clever lasso-throwers, however, such as Daniel was, are able to catch a flying animal by any foot they please, by throwing the noose on the exact spot where the animal is about to

set its foot, after which they pull the rope towards them, and the noose tightens round the foot. Daniel had received an old lasso as a present from Warwick, but so soon as he had the time, he intended to kill a few buffaloes and make lassoes for himself and Walter out of their hides.

The works in and round the fort were for the present completed; the garden supplied the most splendid vegetables, and was adorned with beautiful flowers, which Walter and Dan brought home from their hunting excursions in the forest and the prairie; laurel trees, magnolias, mulberry and plum trees were planted, a dairy was built over the spring inside the fort, and thickly covered with reeds, so that the sunbeams could not penetrate, and at the two foremost angles of the fort towers were built of palisades and provided with loopholes, so as to have the entire face of the paling under fire.

On a cool December morning large herds of buffaloes showed themselves on the prairie, and Daniel proposed to hunt them on horseback, partly for the sake of the hides, but also to salt and smoke a stock of meat, as this could be done in the cold season with less risk of it turning bad. Walter, who had long wished for a chase of this sort, was at once ready; the horses were saddled, the bridles carefully examined, a surcingle was fastened over the jaguar skin, and the sun had scarce began to diffuse its light over the prairie ere the hunters led their eager steeds down the hill into the tall grass. The Taylors stood at the gate and waved their hands to the riders until they disappeared from sight among the isolated groups of trees and shrubs, that stood here and there on the prairie like islands.

Taylor had gone to the garden, his wife and daughter had returned to their domestic duties, and the two boys resolved to go down to the boat and catch some fish with rod and line. Pluto accompanied them, and they had not quite reached the river bank, when they suddenly noticed on the grass before them an animal of the size of a cat, and splendidly striped black and white all along the back. The boys ran towards it, to catch the animal, which, however, instead of flying, laid its tail, covered with white hairs a foot in length, over its back, and entirely covered itself. The boys wanted to take the strange animal home with them, and called up Pluto, but the latter flew at it savagely and tried to seize it. The animal, however, bit Pluto so sharply on the nose that he sprang back howling; but at the same time it turned its back towards him, and discharged a most unpleasantly smelling liquid over him and the two lads. A frightful, disgusting stench filled the air, but angry Pluto fell on the beast once more and bit it to death. The boys ran away, as they could not endure the smell, but Pluto followed them with the creature between his teeth, and in this state they all three soon entered Mrs. Taylor's room, where the dog deposited his victim.

"Good gracious, what is this awful smell you have brought into my room?" Mrs. Taylor exclaimed in horror, for the atmosphere in the house seemed suddenly poisoned.

"It is that animal, mother, that smells so," the boys cried, as they sprang to the door to get a fresh breath of air.

"Then, take it out of the house, it is frightful; enough to make a body sick," Mrs. Taylor shrieked, as she and Amy

ran out of the house. Pluto followed them with a very melancholy look, for he, too, was awfully sick.

"It is really too bad, boys, to bring such a smell into the house ; take the disgusting creature out directly," Mrs. Taylor said in considerable excitement ; but the boys refused to go into the room, because they felt sick already. Mrs. Taylor, upon this, ran up into the turret that looked out on the garden, and called to her husband through a loophole that he must come up to the fort at once. On entering the inclosure he heard with great surprise what had occurred, and went into the house, saying laughingly—

"You must all be mad !"

He, however, had scarce passed the doorway ere he was driven back by the stench that met him. He ran into the room, seized the tongs, caught hold of the disgusting animal and dragged it out of the fort down to the river, where he threw it in.

"Well, such a thing as this never happened to me before in my whole life," he said on returning to the fort ; "how are we to get the smell out of the room ?"

He seized a spade, ran into the house, and dug up the earth at the spot where the beast had lain, for the room was not yet boarded over. After throwing the earth into the river also, he took several firebrands from the hearth, laid them in the middle of the room, and brought in rotten wood, so that the room was soon filled with a dense smoke.

The doors and windows were closed, and when they were opened again at the expiration of an hour, and the smoke was allowed to escape, the stench left behind it by the animal was not nearly so bad.

CHAPTER X.

THE BUFFALO HUNT.—DANIEL IN DANGER.—THE FLAG.—ANOTHER CHASE.—CARRYING HOME THE MEAT.—MAKING A LASSO.—BEE HUNTING.—COLLECTING HONEY.—THE SWARM.—CHRISTMAS EVENING.—THE ALARM.—INDIAN SIGN.—PRECAUTIONS.

WHILE this was occurring, the two hunters rode merrily through the gay parterres of the prairie, and approached a large herd of buffalo that were grazing in a hollow. At this spot the grass was extraordinarily high, so that the backs of the gigantic animals were alone visible, while their heads were deeply buried. Daniel, however, had perceived them a long distance off, and especially selected them, because he hoped to be able to approach them unseen, and thus spare the horses the exertion of catching them up at a gallop. Other herds, that were grazing to the right and left, caught sight of the riders very soon, and galloped off in a wild flight.

"If there is a good fat bull among them, he will soon lag behind the rest of the herd, because he will lose his breath, and then I will show you how a buffalo may be killed without fire-arms," Daniel said to his young friend. "Bend down over your horse's neck, though, so that we may draw as near the herd as we can without being seen; in that way we shall spare our horses."

Walter did as Daniel advised, and they soon drew very near the careless buffaloes, as the wind was blowing right in the faces of the hunters.

The prairie at this spot was a rolling one, that is to say, it rose and sank like waves, and the riders constantly tried to remain in the furrow that led to the small valley in which the buffaloes were grazing. They were hardly fifty yards from them, when several of the animals raised their dark shaggy heads from the grass and gazed in surprise at the horsemen.

"Hurrah!" Daniel now shouted in his powerful voice, and "hurrah!" Walter repeated, at the full pitch of his lungs, and both gave their horses spur and bridle. The whole valley became alive in an instant, the grass parted and heaved all around; some four hundred buffaloes dashed about in wild confusion, the earth groaned like thunder beneath their hoofs, and closely packed together they went off at a clumsy gallop toward the nearest elevation. The entire herd disappeared in the dense cloud of dust floating round them, while the horsemen followed at full speed. The shouts of the hunters seemed to urge the animals to a more hurried flight, and to heighten their alarm, which they announced by savage roars. Away they went, up hill and down hill, over stony heights, through the tall grass in the valleys, over fallen trees, through broad dried-up water-courses, without rest or stopping, like a tornado dashing along the earth. The herd ran for several miles right against the wind, which blew in the hunters' faces the dust raised by their hoofs; but at length the buffaloes diverged slightly to one side, and their huge bodies with

their flying manes became once more visible. The sight of the hunters, however, augmented the terror of the buffaloes, their flight became more and more precipitate, but the fatter ones began to lag behind. The mad chase appeared specially fatiguing to an old bull; its flanks were covered with a white foam, its fire-red tongue hung panting over the long beard on its lower jaw, and it looked sideways at its pursuers with its furious inflamed red eyes. The herd left it further and further behind, and its exertions to keep up were in vain. Its movements became every moment more clumsy, its bounds shorter, and it repeatedly shook its glistening blackish brown mane with a hollow angry roar. For all that it continued galloping, and followed the track of its departing companions in the down-trodden grass.

At this moment Daniel dashed up with hanging reins to this bull, he rose in his stirrups, swung the lasso in his right hand in a wide circle through the air, and hurled the whizzing noose upon the grass in front of the flying animal, which placed its left fore-foot in it at the next bound. At the same instant Daniel pulled back the lasso, for he had turned his horse aside, and the noose was firmly fastened on the buffalo's foot. The negro's horse reared tremendously, and the buffalo, held back in its flight, fell headforemost on the ground, which trembled from the concussion. The huge animal lay on its back with outstretched limbs, and with lightning speed the negro forced his wildly-excited steed to circle round it, and ere the buffalo rose the strong leathern rope was wound round its four legs.


With each circle he made round the animal, he drew its limbs more closely together, while the captive filled the air

with its roars. Foaming with fury, it rolled over and over, and tore at the lasso with all its might, while digging up the ground with its sharp horns.

"We've got him, we've got him!" Walter shouted triumphantly, and urged his startled horse nearer to the giant struggling in its fetters; but Daniel shouted to him—

"Back, back! take care, the lasso doesn't hold, it is coming undone again."

At the same time he pulled his own horse back to drag the lasso tighter, one end of which was fastened to his saddle-bow; but the buffalo struggled so desperately that it suddenly liberated all its legs. Daniel pulled his horse on one side in order to gallop off, and hurl the buffalo down again by its caught leg; but the animal had sprung up with equal speed, and was now rushing with unchained fury at its enemy. The grass was here unusually high and checked the speed of the horse, while the latter cleared a way for the buffalo, which followed with greater ease. They dashed on at a tremendous pace, without drawing nearer or getting further apart; but a stumble on the part of the horse would have infallibly been ruinous to it and its rider. Walter, however, hardly noticed the danger in which his friend was, ere he dug his spurs into his horse and galloped up to the right-hand side of the buffalo. He pointed his rifle at the shoulder of the infuriated animal, and fired both barrels at it. In a second it turned on its new foe, but the side leap tightened the lasso still fastened round its foot, and the negro's horse once more dragged the buffalo to the ground. Daniel was pre-



pared for this, and cleverly and rapidly turned his horse toward the buffalo, round which he again circled and entangled it in the lasso. This time he succeeded in binding the animal's legs so securely, that all its efforts were in vain, and it soon yielded to its fate. Its strength rapidly failed it, for Walter's both shots were mortal, and the buffalo gradually bled to death.

"That might have been an ugly affair for us," Daniel said, as he leapt from his horse and hobbled its fore-legs. "It was a stupid thing to do, as we could have shot' the buffalo with half the trouble; but I wanted to show you that such a huge beast could be killed without fire arms. You have really saved my life, for if my horse had trodden on the lasso, it must have fallen with me, and it would in all probability have been my last buffalo hunt. I tried to loosen the lasso from my saddle-bow, but was unable to undo the knot. Now, we will put up a flag over the old fellow, and ride home for a cart to fetch the meat away: he is wonderfully fat."

With these words the negro ran to a mosquito-tree growing close at hand, cut a long branch from it with his knife, fastened to the end a red silk neckerchief, which he had brought for the purpose, and planted the flag over the buffalo, so that the strong breeze blew it out. Walter had in the meanwhile reloaded his rifle, and the hunters once more mounted their horses and galloped back to the fort, which they reached before dinner.

"Hallo! there has been a skunk here," Daniel cried, when they reached the gate, where the still strong effluvium of the animal killed by Pluto met them. In the house, too,

it had not been entirely removed, and Daniel informed his friends that the animal was a skunk, or species of polecat, which defends itself against its enemies by the discharge of a most offensive fluid.

Dinner was soon over, and the light cart got ready to bring home the meat of the slain buffalo. Walter drove, and Daniel followed him on horseback. They soon saw the red flag fluttering in the wind, and above it several hundred buzzards circling in the air, which dared not venture near the red cloth. When the hunters approached it, several wolves also took to flight, which had collected some distance from the buffalo, but had also been kept at bay by the fluttering handkerchief.

Daniel fastened his horse to the cart, and then set to work, with Walter's help, in taking off the buffalo's splendid hide. Then the body was cut up into joints, which were placed in the cart. The meat was streaked with yellow veins of fat, and Daniel declared that he had rarely come across so remarkably plump a buffalo. The hunters had hardly gone a hundred yards from the remnants of the animal left behind, ere the buzzards came down by hundreds, and settled upon them. The return journey was rather slow, owing to the tall grass, and not in a straight line for the fort, as Walter had to keep in the upper ground, where the grass was not so high. They were approaching one of the wooded islands that here lay scattered about the prairie, when Daniel, who was riding on one side of the cart, suddenly turned his horse toward it, and said to Walter—

“Stop! behind that island there are several buffaloes, and you can easily get within range of them. I should not

like to cut up the noble hide we have in the cart for lassoes, as it would be a pity. Shoot one of those buffaloes, so that we may have another hide. Quick! hurry into the clump, while I wait with the horses."

With these words, the negro dismounted, and led his horse up to the cart, while Walter sprang from his seat and hurried through the grass to the coppice. The latter was composed of splendid oaks, tulip-trees, planes, and maples, whose trunks rose out of thick, richly-foliaged bushes, while the entire thicket was only some hundred yards in circumference. Walter soon reached the coppice, and cautiously glided through its deep shade to the other side. Many withered branches lay on the ground, on which he carefully avoided treading, lest he should reveal his approach to the buffaloes, and the nearer he got to the skirt of the wood, the more carefully he set his foot on the ground. Soon, however, he reached the trunk of a large oak behind the last bushes, and peeped out at the prairie. He gave a glad start, for only a few paces from him stood five enormous bulls in the tall grass, staring at the thicket. They must have heard something which seemed to them suspicious, for they did not once turn their eyes from the spot where Walter was standing. The latter, however, was hidden by the oak, and raised his rifle to his shoulder with the utmost caution; then he slowly bent forward, and aimed at one of the huge animals. His closeness to it made him feel uncomfortable, for he seemed so small, so insignificant, compared with this monster, and he thought that one of its footsteps would crush him. This feeling was only momentary, and he fired. The thunder-

ing sound of the rifle, and the crash with which the buffaloes burst into the thicket, confused Walter; he pressed close against the oak trunk, and felt it quiver as the gigantic animals shot past it and disappeared in the gloom of the wood. He heard their footsteps echo for a long distance, but at the same time noticed in the underwood a rustling, and dashing, and breaking, which did not move from the spot. Walter's heart beat with delight, for this noise must be produced by the wounded buffalo. He hastened out into the prairie and round the coppice, till he noticed Daniel, who was coming toward him with the cart, and shouting—

“Have you shot one?”

“How many buffaloes did you see bolting?” Walter asked.

“Four,” the negro replied.

“In that case I have shot one, for there were five of them, and I heard it just now rolling about in the wood. Shall we go in?”

“Let me do it, while you remain with the horses; for a wounded buffalo is a dangerous companion.”

Walter now went up to the horses, while Daniel crept into the coppice, rifle in hand. In a few moments, however, he shouted joyously—

“It is lying here dead as a door nail, you shot it through the heart.”

Directly after the negro came out of the bushes again, bound the horses to a tree, and then went with his young friend to the slaughtered buffalo, in order to remove its skin. In addition to this, the best bits of meat, the tongue,

and the marrow-bones were put in the cart, and then the hunters proceeded homewards with an ample store of meat. The sun was setting as they reached the fort, where they were heartily welcomed.

The next morning there was plenty to do in the fort. Taylor and his wife and daughter cut up the meat and salted it, but they hung a portion of it, cut in thin slices, on sticks over a smoky fire, in the sunshine, and it was soon dried. Walter and Daniel took the two buffalo hides, and removed with scrapers all the fleshy particles still adhering to them; then they anointed the handsomest hide with the brains of the two buffaloes, and folded it up ready for tanning the next day. The other hide, however, Daniel laid on a level spot with the hair downwards, and fastened it tightly with wooden pegs. Then he stuck a very sharp knife into the middle of it, turned it in a small semicircle, so that he could catch hold of the hide, and began cutting a strip an inch wide out of it, going round and round till he reached the pegs, and thus obtained a strip several hundred yards in length. Probably, though, he was not aware that this operation was as old as Dido's time. The strip of hide was then tied taut between two trees, and the hair shaved off with knives. Fred and Charles had to aid the negro in this job in addition to Walter, and when it was quite completed, heavy logs of wood were suspended from the hide rope, so that it might be stretched to its fullest extent. At the same time it was kept wet, until Daniel cut it into five equal lengths on the next morning, which he rolled up, fastened their ends together, and hung from the branch of a tree. After this he began plaiting the five strips tightly

together, thus producing a rope which was upwards of forty feet long. This he once more fastened between two trees, rubbed it with bear's grease, and hung heavy weights upon it, in order to stretch it, and thus rendered it round and thin, as the strands were drawn tightly into each other. After the rope had been stretched for several days, and become perfectly dry, Daniel made a noose at one end and the lasso was then perfect. It was very smooth and supple, and extraordinarily strong. The other buffalo hide Daniel tanned ; it was as soft as a bit of cloth, and made a first-rate coverlet for Walter's bed.

One morning at breakfast, when Mrs. Taylor put on the table the cask of honey Warwick had given her to sweeten the coffee, she said—

"This is the last of the honey, we must try whether we cannot buy some of the Warwicks."

"Buy honey?" Daniel said, with a laugh, "that would be a pretty thing ; why we live in a country flowing with honey. No, Mrs. Taylor, you need not send to Warwick's for that, as I will fetch you directly as much as you require ; only give me a few jars, and in a couple of hours they shall be full of honey."

Mrs. Taylor kept Daniel to his word, and after breakfast he took the three boys with him to a point on the river bank where it had a sandy slope. Here he sat down, and kept his eyes fixed on the water's edge. In a few minutes several bees came flying up, and settled down on the water to drink. When they rose in the air again, Daniel looked after them as far as he could see them, then proceeded to the spot where he had lost them and stuck a stick in the

ground, on which he had fastened a bit of paper smeared with honey. In a short time several bees settled on it, and soon loaded themselves with the sweet juice. When they flew away, Daniel again followed them with the stick, and planted it at the spot where he last saw them. Thus he went on for about a quarter of an hour up to the skirt of the forest, until the bees, whose number had rapidly increased, turned away from the paper to an old plane-tree, which stood right at the extremity of the wood.

"They live in that tree, I rather think," Daniel said, as he walked up to the plane, and examined its branches. "Quite right, they are up there," he cried to the boys; "do you see the black mark on that large branch? those are the bees in front of their hive. Walter, light a large fire here, while I climb up the tree and cut off the branch."


The negro threw his lasso over one of the branches of the mighty tree, so that its two ends hung down, secured them round the trunk, and clambered up the rope. After this he let down a line, to which the boys fastened his wood axe, which he pulled up to him. He then went close to the branch, on which the bees were settled, and began lopping it off close to the stem. It was no light task, for the branch was a good three feet in diameter, and the negro's position was awkward, so that he was obliged to rest frequently; still, at the end of an hour the branch began to sway, and suddenly fell to the ground with a loud crack. On falling it broke into several pieces, and the hollow in which the honey was, was laid bare. The bees rose like a black cloud over their ruined abode, and Daniel shouted to the boys to keep close to the fire till he came down. He

slipped down the lasso, hurried to the fire and seized some brands. The boys had to do the same, and they carried the smoking logs to the broken branch, not troubling themselves about the bees which swarmed close to it. The smoke drove away the angry insects rapidly, and their plunderers began cutting the honeycomb out with their knives, and placing it in the vessels they had brought with them. The honey was as clear as water, and had such a splendid, aromatic flavour, that the four bee-hunters made a hearty meal of it while at work. They filled four jars with it, and returned heavily laden to the fort, where Mrs. Taylor was delighted with the honey.

"There shall never be any want of honey, for I promise to find a hundred hives in a short time," Daniel said, pleased at having been useful to his friends again; "it would be a pity, though, if we let the bees escape, for they are a healthy young swarm. We will capture them to-night, and settle them here at the fort."

In order to effect this, a piece of a fallen hollow tree was cut off in the forest, and dragged to the fort by the oxen. Then it was laid with its lower cavity on a board, while the upper one was covered with a plank, and an opening was cut in the lower edge. When evening arrived, the bee-hunters proceeded once more to the lopped branch, where they found the bees collected in a swarm. Daniel shook them into a bag, carried them to the fort, and turned them out there into the hollow tree, which was then replaced on the board. The very next morning the bees began to work in making cells in their new home.

The labour and care of the industrious settlers met with



a full reward; the garden supplied them uninterruptedly with an abundance of splendid vegetables and fruit; the melons ripened in spite of the winter season, the toothsome pumpkins were harvested, and others grown for the sake of their outer shell, which are used for all sorts of vessels, and sweet potatoes and earth-nuts grew abundantly. The kine had also increased in number, the sow had brought eight little pigs into the world, and the fowls were too numerous to count. The latter were left entirely to themselves; they roosted during the night on the nearest trees, laid their eggs in the bushes, and led their chicklings to the fort, where a new brood was always heartily welcomed.

The smoke-house was filled with meat, the casks made by Walter and Daniel were full of salted provisions, a large stock of hay was kept in the fort, and a second load of maize had been brought home from the Choctaw River. Warwick's people repeatedly visited the Taylors, and all the members of the family were delighted at the prosperity of the new settlement. Warwick was ever glad of any opportunity when he could be useful to Taylor, and on every visit brought him some valuable article. Thus, he made him a present of a bag of peach, plum, and apricot stones to plant, for in that country the finest fruit trees are grown from the stones, and generally bear in their fourth year. On his last visit he also brought four grown-up pups, intended to help in guarding the fort.

On this occasion, too, he expressed great surprise that the Taylors had been so entirely free from the hostilities of the Indians, and declared that it was a most remarkable

exception. He hoped and wished that this calm might not be such a one as generally precedes a heavy storm, and advised unremitted caution.

Thus Christmas approached, and Mrs. Taylor could not refrain from making preparations for the festival, as she had so often done in dear, never-to-be-forgotten England. There was a mighty pudding, and though the roast beef was wanting, as it would have been too expensive to kill an ox expressly for the purpose, still boiled turkey and buffalo tongue offered a very excellent substitute. Besides, the whole party were very merry, and that was the chief thing after all. In the evening a bowl of whiskey punch was made, and all drank with thankful hearts the health of their good friend Daniel.

Although much was wanting which in England would have aided to heighten the solemnity of the Christmas evening, the cheerfulness and happiness of the settlers were not the less great, and they indulged with glad hearts in all the joy which the sacred evening offered them.

They passed it in careless merriment, and midnight warned them that it was time to retire to rest, when the dogs outside the fort suddenly set up a tremendous barking. They had run out through the small openings left purposely for them in the palisades, and at first appeared to have an enemy before them close to the fort, but the noise gradually retired in the direction of Plum Stream, where it finally died out.

Taylor, Daniel, and the boys had hastily seized their weapons, and posted themselves in the yard. They kept their eyes fixed on the top of the palisades, to prevent any

foes from climbing over them, and listened to every sound, near or remote. Ere long, however, all the dogs returned to the fort, and thus offered its inhabitants the consoling thought that no enemy was any longer near it. Daniel earnestly begged his friends to go to bed, while he would keep watch during the rest of the night, but Walter could not be induced to leave him.

The Taylors thanked him for all his kindness and care, and then sought their beds in a tranquil frame of mind, while Daniel sent the four dogs given by Warwick outside the fort, but kept Pluto by his side. Then he seated himself with Walter on the bench in front of the house, whence he could survey the palisades, and told his young friend of the many sanguinary quarrels in which he had been engaged, while living with the Indians. The night passed without any disturbance, and when day broke and Taylor came out of the house, the negro went out of the fort with Walter, in order to convince himself of the cause of the nocturnal uproar. He looked about in the dewy grass at the foot of the mound, and soon perceived on the trodden down and broken blades the track of the dogs where they had followed their enemy. He could not distinguish the trail of that enemy in the grass, but he followed it as far as the wood on the Plum Stream. There it ran round the wood till it turned into it at the first buffalo path. Here Daniel stopped, gave Walter his rifle to carry, and went down on his knees to examine the dusty ground. He had crawled but a short distance along it, when he called Walter to him, and showed him the scarcely visible imprint of a human foot in the light dust.

“They were Waco or Tonkaway Indians, that can be easily distinguished by the sharpness of the thick hard soles of their mocassins,” he said. “These two tribes are what are called Foot Indians, and are the only ones inhabiting these southern regions, while all the other tribes are Horse Indians, or such as make their hunting and war excursions on horseback, and always take large bands of those animals about with them on their journey. The Horse Indians are on the move all the year round ; they live exclusively by the chase, go in spring far north after the countless buffalo herds into the great prairies, and return in autumn to the south, where the pasturage is always green. The Foot Indians, on the other hand, never leave these parts, and creep like snakes about the forests and thickets, because they live in an eternal feud with the Horse Indians, by whom they are as hated and pursued as by the white borderers. They are all supplied with fire-arms, while the other savages in these regions have none, and hence they are far more dangerous than the latter. We must now be on our guard, for this will certainly not be the last visit they pay us.”

The negro then showed his companion the trail further along the path, for the purpose of teaching him to detect it, and they returned to the fort, in order to take some precautionary measures against such nocturnal and uninvited guests.

On arriving there, Daniel made out of the iron bands with which Taylor's chests had been fastened down, two receptacles in the shape of baskets, intended to be filled with pine chips, and illumine the neighbourhood of the

fort rapidly at night. He then erected at each of the front angles of the palisades a post, to the end of which he fastened a pulley. Through the latter he passed an iron chain, to the end of which one of the baskets was hung, so that it could be hoisted and swung several feet above the palisades. In this way the negro intended to light up the neighbourhood of the fort, in the event of any night surprise, so that the enemy might be seen through the loopholes and shot down. The arrangement was extremely simple, and very soon finished, and an ample stock of pine chips was prepared.

This new reminder of the danger in which the Taylors lived, had freshened up their apprehension; they saw the evening approach with terror, and started at the slightest bark of the dogs. The horses were fetched from the pasture at sunset, watered and brought into the fort, and the gates were at once closed and the four dogs turned out. The fowling-pieces were all loaded with slugs for the defence of the blockhouse, and all the other guns were kept in readiness for immediate use.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE INUNDATION.—KILLING AN ALLIGATOR.—THE BEAVER DAM,—
HABITS OF THE BEAVER.—THE AMBUSH.—THE INDIANS' ATTACK.—
WALTER'S ESCAPE.—SHOOTING THE WACOS.—THE ENEMY'S SPOILS.

SEVERAL weeks passed without anything further being seen of the Indians, and the alarm of the settlers gradually disappeared through growing accustomed to the danger. The time had arrived to sow the maize, in which operation Taylor and Walter in turn assisted the negro, but one of them always remained at the fort.

While the field was being again ploughed and then sown, the dogs had to guard it, for which purpose Daniel fastened them up on all four sides of it.

This job too was performed without any interruption, and in a few weeks the maize showed itself above the ground in fresh green rows. The joy of the colonists at the brilliant prospects of their first crop was great, and it was with regret that, by Daniel's advice, they pulled up the many superfluous shoots, although the negro explained to them that the maize would grow much better with a smaller quantity. In this task Fred and Charles helped, as they also did in piling up the earth round the plants.

The field could be seen from the mound, and so soon

as the fort was opened at daybreak, its inhabitants took a delighted look at the bright green patch which the maize displayed. Hence my readers can imagine the alarm of the settlers on coming out of the fort one morning, and perceiving that the field as well as the entire plain from the base of the hill to the bend of the Plum Stream, was converted into a lake. Walter was the first to notice the inundation, and at his summons all hurried out to be equally sadly surprised.

"That is water from the Plum Stream, as the Bear River is not swollen," Daniel said, as he looked thoughtfully at the calm expanse of water, which spread for nearly half a mile up to the wood. "The flowing of the stream into Bear River is certainly checked, and hence, the water has found a side track. But how can it have happened?"

"Can the Indians have played us a trick, in order to destroy our crops?" Taylor remarked.

"No," Daniel replied, decidedly. "From Indians we have only to expect concealed or open attacks on our persons, and they will kill us, if it be in their power; but they will not dream of doing us an injury. Why do they not kill our cows, which often stray so far on the prairie as to get out of sight? If they could have made the water so deep that it would drown us, or if they could deprive us of it during a siege, so that we must perish of thirst, they would do it; but they would not think of performing so tough a job as damming the Plum Stream, unless it endangered our lives. There is some other reason, be it what it will. We will soon find out, however. Take your

weapons, young gentleman, and we will proceed at once to the Plum Stream."

With this the negro and Walter ran into the fort, fetched their rifles, and ran along the garden fence to the bank of Bear River, which was higher than the prairie and still free from water. They followed the bank into the forest, and could only advance with great difficulty, for the road was thickly covered with thorns and bushes. Still, they forced their way, and here and there found the water risen. They soon passed the inundated field and approached the mouth of Plum Stream, but did not hear the usual sound with which it poured its waters into Bear Creek. Here the ground of the forest was also dry, and when they reached the bank of Plum Stream, they found its bed nearly free from water, and only a pool here and there full.

"As I supposed, the stream is dammed up, but further on," Daniel said, looking down from the bank; "I am really curious to know how it happened. I cannot imagine that the Indians have done it. Come, we will go up the stream in order to solve the riddle."

The negro in front, and Walter following him, had only gone a short distance, when Daniel stopped, and pointed down to the bed of the stream, saying—

"We will put an end to that gentleman's fun. Look at that monstrous alligator peeping out of the pond, which is too shallow for it. Hold my rifle while I cut off its head."

Daniel handed Walter his gun, drew his axe out of his belt, and actively sprang down from the bank. He had drawn near the pond where the alligator lay, ere the latter

noticed the negro, when it opened its terrible jaws and swam toward him. The movements of this odious, dangerous animal are fortunately as clumsy and slow as those of a tortoise, and neither man nor animal has anything to apprehend from it, so long as its presence is known. But when lying motionless, it resembles an old rotten log of wood, and watches till a living being carelessly approaches it, whom it at once seizes with its fearful teeth, from which no liberation is possible.

"Wait, you monster, you shan't do any more mischief," Daniel shouted to the savage brute, which was crawling toward him, snapping its jaws and lashing its tail.

The negro had approached within a foot of it, and swung his heavy axe over its head. The alligator rose on its fore-legs, as high as it could, and held up its widely-opened mouth, as if it wanted to seize the axe; but the heavy mass of steel whirled through the air, and was buried in the monster's skull. Daniel leapt back, but was obliged to leave go of the axe, for the alligator snapped at him furiously, and pursued him, in spite of the fissure in its head.

"Throw me down your axe, young gentleman, for I do not care to get too near the fiend," the negro shouted to his companion, and caught the axe which the latter threw to him.

The alligator was striking furiously around it with head and tail, while the long axe-handle stood up out of its skull; but Daniel took advantage of a moment when he could approach the brute sideways, and cut its head from the body with one stroke.

"There, you cruel, wicked brute, it's all up now with your murdering, so give me my axe back," Daniel said, as he pulled the implement out of the dead alligator, and leaped on the bank again.

He then hastened with Walter further up the stream, and they had gone about a thousand yards, when they noticed in front of them a wall of fallen trees, branches, and brushwood, which lay in wild confusion, but seemed closely bound together. At the same time they saw that the water held back by this dam had overflowed the bank on either side.

"Ah, ah! so it is you, is it, who have played us this trick? Well, you must pay for it with your skins," the negro cried with a loud laugh, and then turned to his astonished companion, "Who do you think made this dam?"

"Who else but the Indians; it was a terribly stiff job," Walter replied, and looked with admiration at the trunks, several feet in thickness, that were piled up one on the other.

"No, no, young gentleman, they are other carpenters; they are beavers."

"Beavers! is it possible that beavers have gnawn through these trees?"

"Of course; just look at the stumps that stand out of the water; you can easily notice the bites. But now, quick, let us make a hole in the dam, so that we may get the water off the field. It lies higher than the prairie, and will soon be drained dry. Oh, how glad they will be at the fort when they see the maize again, to which the short

inundation will do a deal of good. But take care, when the water once has an outlet it will dash through it with tremendous force, for it is at least fifteen feet deep on the other side of the dam."

Upwards of a dozen large and small trees had been dropped into the stream from both banks to form the dam, and they lay so close together that the water here was not more than thirty feet wide. The spaces between these trunks were so closely filled with branches, brushwood, bushes, and mud, that not a drop of water could penetrate.

Walter and Daniel clambered on to the dam, in order to let the water out, but the negro cried to his companion—

"Just look at the nibbled ends of these trunks and branches; do not they seem exactly as if they had been cut with a sharp chisel? And now look at the heap of splinters lying all about; we might fancy ourselves in a carpenter's shop. Those two aspens have been deeply gnawn all round; but the rising water disturbed the beavers in their work, or they would have had them both down by this time. How cleverly the animals have arranged these thousands of stakes between the trees under our feet, so as to render the dam water-tight, and give firmness to the mud."

While the negro was talking to Walter, he pulled out of the centre of the dam, sticks, branches, and bushes, and threw them behind him into the empty bed of the stream, while Walter followed his example. They soon made large orifices in several parts of the dam, but still it let no water through, because its front side was covered with a thick layer of mud. Daniel, however, now pulled several bushes

out of this ; the water burst through the mud, and the stream shot with such a force between the trees into the empty bed behind the dam, that within a few minutes, brushwood, sticks, and branches were all carried off on the wildly-foaming waves toward Bear Creek.

Daniel and Walter had hurried to one end of the dam, for the tremendous current even carried away the heavy trees, and hurled them wildly in the air.

“ Sit down by my side on this trunk, young gentleman ; in a short time we shall see the river banks again free from water, and then we will try to get on ; it is rather higher than the forest, and much higher than the prairie. I should like to have a look at the beaver-houses, and form a guess at the number of the animals : it must be a large colony, or else they could not have formed this dam. Three or four beavers always gnaw at a tree simultaneously and perform the task with extraordinary speed, as they, only choose soft wood. When the tree is down, the whole of the colony, which often consists of a hundred head, fall upon it, and each beaver attacks a branch. When they want to make a dam, they fell the trees very cleverly, so that they may fall across the stream ; and they carry the gnawn-off branches in their teeth between the trees, as well as thinner boughs and bushes, and then bring up the mud on their broad flat hairless tails, to fill up all the openings with it.

“ The stream, stopped in its course, rapidly rises, and overflows on both sides, after which the beavers build their houses on open spots in the deep water. They make them of logs two to three feet long, which they lay in a circle

on the bottom, building upwards, and filling up the gaps so thoroughly, that they form a stout thick wall, which they construct some three or four feet above the level of the water, and finish off in the shape of a dome. The building looks like a bee-hive, but has no visible entrance, for that is at the bottom of the stream. The interior is formed into two compartments generally, one of which is above the water, with an entrance through the flooring.

"This upper room, which is never touched by the water, the beavers line with moss, and keep their young in it. In the north, where the winters are cold, they carry a large store of boughs into the lower room, whose bark supplies them with food during that season, when the water is frozen over, and they are unable to get to land to bite off fresh twigs; for the beaver lives exclusively on bark, and not on fish, as has been so frequently, though erroneously, believed.

"No strange beaver is ever admitted into a colony—it must either go away, or is bitten to death. If the colony grow too numerous, it divides into two or more parties, and each seeks a new habitation. They also leave a settlement so soon as soft wood becomes scarce in the neighbourhood of the water. The beavers often make long journeys and march for miles over hills and through valleys in search of a new home."

"They must be strange creatures; can't we get hold of one of them?" Walter said, after this lesson from the negro.

"One of them? No, we will catch the whole party, and not one of them shall escape. I will ride down to


Choctaw River, and borrow from the settlers there all the traps they possess. We must, however, shoot one male beaver before we can catch the rest; for we must take from him the castoreum, in order to lead his comrades into the trap by means of it. It is an oily fluid contained in two glands."

While the two hunters were conversing in this wise, the water dashed and foamed with wild impetuosity through the opened dam, and sank rapidly above it. In a few hours the banks of the stream became once more visible, and now that the water from the prairie no longer poured over them, the speed of the current was considerably reduced.

"Our field must now be entirely free from water, for it lies quite as high as this bank," Daniel said as he rose. "But now come, we will try whether we can get up the stream."

With these words he sprang off the tree on to the bank, and Walter followed him. The ground was remarkably soft and slippery, which made it difficult walking. But the hunters pushed on boldly in spite of that, although they now and then sank in up to the knees, or had to wade through a pool of water. The further they got through the bushes, creepers, and thorns, the clearer the forest grew, and they had reached a rather large glade in it, through which the stream wound, when Daniel stopped and pointed to a tall heap of brushwood rounded at the top, which rose some ten feet out of the stream.

"That is one of the beaver-houses; it looks like a gigantic porcupine. Its inhabitants will be in a great



stew by this time, as the water has fallen so greatly. I am convinced that they have all gone to the dam, in order to repair it; but they will be greatly surprised on seeing the large hole in it. You can see from this house why the beavers formed the dam. They have raised the water to such a height that their abode stands in a lake, and is quite inaccessible to their enemies. Now, the bank is scarce ten yards from it, and a jaguar, panther, or bear could easily scent the animals in their house, and surprise them there, for the heap of brushwood can be easily pulled down. Although the old beavers would run no risk, as they would only have to spring out of the lower room into the water, and thus escape the enemy, their young would fall victims to them, and hence they set the whole surrounding land under water. Now I will make you a proposal, young gentleman. I believe that this is a very favourable moment to shoot a beaver, because they are swimming about, owing to the shallowness of the water, and will show themselves on the surface, which they generally do only at night."

"Tell me what I am to do," said Walter.

"You can sit here, while I go higher up the stream, and watch another beaver-house. We shall not be expected back at the fort, as our friends will see by the sinking of the water that we are at work. Hide yourself in the bushes round that poplar, for you can look over the water from there. If a beaver shows itself on the surface, you must shoot it through the head, and at once jump into the stream to seize it, before the current carries it off. If you do not hit it in the head, it will escape you. The water

here is not deep. Be very cautious, and do not stir, for the beaver is one of the most cunning of animals, and do not lose your patience, for we may reckon on remaining here till nightfall. If it should last so long, and you cannot see to shoot, come up the bank to me, then we will walk to the end of the water, still standing on the prairie, and go home through the dry grass."

After Daniel had wished his comrade success, he hurried along the bank, and found at no great distance a number of beaver-houses rising out of the stream, as well as several others built in hollows in the forest, and surrounded by a very shallow pool. He knew, however, that the latter were already deserted by their inhabitants, and hence did not waste time in examining them. As he did not wish to remain near Walter, and spoil his sport by firing, he walked further up the stream, and reached a spot where the water had not risen over the banks, and the forest on either side of it only consisted of tall trees and a few bushes. It was the same spot where Walter had shot the bear on that evening. Here Daniel found another beaver-house in the stream, whose banks were very far apart, and formed a sort of small lake. The negro selected an elevated spot, whence he could watch the whole surface of the water, and shoot with certainty as far as the beaver-house.

An old maple stood here, against whose trunk he sat down, after sticking some bushes in the ground before him, to hide himself from the beavers. It was the afternoon by this time, and the sun was beginning to cast its beams obliquely through the forest.

Everything was quiet, there was not the slightest stir either in the foliage or on the unrippled water, and the golden band which the sunshine threw across the pond was only rippled at times by a rising fish. Hours passed away without a beaver revealing its presence, although the negro's sharp eyes constantly watched the water. The shadows of the trees grew longer and darker over the ground, and here and there between the trunks antelopes and deer were visible, walking confidently to the stream in order to quench their thirst in its cool waters. Daniel watched them as they played together, rubbed their horns against the trees, or sought the most toothsome plants in the grass; but suddenly several of them started, as if alarmed by something, and held up their heads to listen.

Daniel looked quickly round him in the forest, so far as he could see, but noticed nothing that could cause this sudden attention on the part of the animals. "It was probably some large bird of prey that startled them," Daniel thought, and looked again at the beaver-house; at this moment he saw a movement in the water no great distance from it, a dark spot appeared on the surface and moved rapidly toward the bank. It was a beaver, which was parting the water with its nose as it swam along, and left two long lines at an acute angle behind it on the smooth surface.

Daniel cautiously raised his rifle to his shoulder and aimed at the head of the approaching animal, until it was only a few yards from land when he fired. The beaver turned over in the water and dashed it up; but the negro had already placed his rifle against a tree, and, with one

bound, reached his dying quarry. He seized the beaver by the tail, and swam back with it ashore in a few seconds.

Here he shook the water off him, hung on his bullet bag, and loaded the empty barrel again. He had hardly completed this and stooped down to seat himself against the tree, and wait for Walter, when a bullet entered the tree close to Daniel's head.

The negro bounded from the mound down to a colossal fallen cypress, which lay scarce twenty yards from him, and threw himself on the grass behind it. Daniel's sharp, practised eye had, however, recognized the marksman at the first look round as an Indian, who was peeping out behind an oak, and concealed himself again directly he had fired. This oak was lower down the stream, about one hundred yards from the bank, and Daniel's first thought was directed to Walter, who must soon arrive in that direction. He thrust his axe into the belt, and was on the point of at once attacking the Indian ere the latter could load his rifle again, for he knew that the savages never carried double barrels; but before doing so he raised his head above the trunk of the tree. At the same instant two shots were fired from other trees, and a bullet passed through his hat. The negro had also seen the two Indians who fired.

He was undecided whether to dash forward to commence the action in the open, and thus try to reach Walter; but at this moment the thought struck him that a larger number of savages might possibly be concealed in the vicinity, and that he should lead them right on to his com-

panion by flying. The tree behind which he lay had been levelled by a storm and torn out of the ground by the roots, which rose to a height of six feet above the earth, and hung down deep into the hole which they had left in the ground. Daniel now leapt into this hollow, because he was hidden from the Indians by the roots, and could still see through them; only his head emerged above the hole, and he was enabled to look for the Indians all around; but although he tried his utmost, he could see nothing of them. He constantly watched the three trees from which the shots had come, and held his double-barrelled rifle in readiness for immediate use.

The last sunbeams had departed, and evening was spreading its dusk through the forest, while the negro's anxiety about his companion increased with each minute, and at length became a fearful agony.

Walter must soon come up the bank, the savages would notice him as he carelessly walked along, a considerable distance off, and then he would be surely lost! A deadly fear now urged the negro to leave his hole, so that Walter might be warned by the repeated firing of the danger that impended over him; but at this moment he saw the savage who had first fired at him spring with lightning speed from behind the oak to another nearer the stream. He did this so rapidly that Daniel could not follow him with his rifle between the roots through which he was looking, and at the same moment his eye was attracted by two other Indians, also standing behind trees, and whom he had not seen before.

There were five of them then, and their purpose was

to surround him, for two of them now sprang from the other side nearer to the water. The savage who first changed his station was now exactly in the direction whence Walter must come, and Daniel gazed over him at the small elevation which rose behind him. At this moment his comrade's hat appeared above the hill, and, directly after, his form up to the chest.

"Indians! back, fly!" the negro yelled to his young friend with all the strength of his lungs, and springing out of the hole to the side of the cypress, he waved his hat to him. At the same minute the two Indians at his side fired, though without hitting Daniel, who at once leaped on the tree and shot one of these two savages through the head, ere he could regain his hiding-place. With a hideous war-yell, the negro then rushed out toward the Indian who stood behind the oak, betwixt him and Walter; but the savage pointed his rifle at him, and in all probability would have settled Daniel, had not Walter fired at the instant, and the Indian dropped with a shriek.

"Hurrah!" Walter shouted, so that it echoed far through the forest, and ran toward his friend, and "Hurrah!" yelled Daniel, as he turned to the other three Indians, who had taken to flight, and were darting between the trees like stags.

"Stop, you must remain here!" the negro shouted to the last of the flying savages, and quietly raised his rifle to his shoulder; "you are a Waco—a snake—and have probably heard ere now of the Black Panther!"

The fire flashed from Daniel's rifle, and though the Indian dodged wonderfully in his flight, the bullet reached

him, and he turned over twice—thrice—four times ere he fell dead.

Walter had employed the moment in reloading his empty barrel, but Daniel interrupted him by hastily seizing his hand and pressing it to his lips, as he exclaimed—

“A gracious God has saved us, young gentleman; let us praise and thank Him for it!”

Trembling with joy, he again pressed Walter's hand to his mouth, and then said—

“I have once more to thank you for my life. The Red-skin had aimed carefully and well. I already felt the bullet in me; but you made sparks, and indeed aimed better than he did.”

“And you saved my life as well, Daniel, for had you not made the signal to me at the exposure of your own life, I should have known nothing of the Indians till I felt their bullets. You have done as much for me, and even more, than I did for you; for no rifle was pointed at me.”

“We have fought well for all that; the three fiends appear to me to be all dead: they are Wacos, the worst and most dangerous Indians of all. We will take their weapons and ornaments as a reminiscence, and then hurry home, for they will feel alarmed about us in the fort,” Daniel said, as he drove the bullets down his rifle, and put on fresh caps.

The companions went first to the Indian last shot, and found him lying dead on his face. The bullet had passed through the back of his head.

"It was a long shot, and so I aimed rather high, but I kept the straight line. It was not the worst shot I ever fired," the negro said as he removed from the corpse the bullet-pouch, tomahawk, and ornaments, which consisted of brass bracelets, ear-rings, and a necklace of wampum. Then he seized his rifle, and said—

"Look, the scoundrel did not once fire at us, as his gun is still loaded."

"But why did you call out to him that he must have heard of the Black Panther?" Walter asked, as he looked at the dead man.

"Oh, yes, that is a way of speaking among the Indians," Daniel answered with evident embarrassment, and walked ahead of his companion to the man who fell first, whose forehead was pierced by a bullet. They took off his weapons and ornaments also. They found the savage shot by Walter quite dead, the bullet having passed through his spine. Walter took his weapons, while Daniel loaded himself with his ornaments, and then both returned to the beaver, from which Daniel cut the glands containing the castoreum. After doing this he fastened a bush to its tail, and threw it into the water, where the bush floated, for it was too late to remove the skin, which, however, Daniel intended to fetch on the next day. Darkness had quite set in when the two hunters reached the prairie, but the new moon was standing in the heavens, and its pale light was sufficient to facilitate their progress. They reached the fort greatly exhausted, and were announced to the inhabitants, while still a long way off, by the barking of the dogs.

When they reached the gate, Taylor had already opened it, and greeted them with a "Thank goodness."

"But where have you been so long? We were really alarmed about you," he said, as they passed through the gate. "The water has disappeared from the field, by the way. What was the cause of the inundation?"

"A beaver colony had built a dam in Plum Stream, which we have destroyed," Daniel replied.

"But what rifles and other articles are those you have?" Taylor asked in surprise, as the light of the candle, with which Mrs. Taylor appeared in the doorway, fell on the two hunters.

"We received them as a present from three Waco Indians, though against their will," Daniel remarked, and added with a laugh, "No, we inherited them from them."

"Good heavens! surely you have not been fighting with the Indians," Mrs. Taylor said in terror.

"And famously fought, too," the negro answered as he hung the rifles on the wall, and laid down the rest of the plunder. "We had five of them against us two, and shot three; the other two may tell that to their comrades as a warning."

The occurrences were now narrated, partly by Daniel, partly by Walter, during which many an "Oh!" and "Ah!" escaped from Mrs. Taylor and Amy's lips.

"The Almighty watched over you," Taylor said, when the story was ended, and Mrs. Taylor wiped away unseen the tears of silent gratitude which had filled her eyes.

"I trust that the inundation will do no injury to our maize," the former remarked, after the affair with the Indians had been discussed for a long while.

"On the contrary, it will shoot up all the stronger, for the water has only refreshed it," the negro replied. "That reminds me—to-morrow evening, after we have closed the fort, I will bring up the canoe to the rock at the back of the hill, and come in by the ladder. Our boat might be easily stolen or destroyed by the Indians, and, besides, we should have it to hand, were we ever obliged to fly, which may heaven prevent."

On the following morning, when Mrs. Taylor called them to breakfast, the negro had already ridden out, and fetched the beaver. After removing the magnificent skin, and cleaning the carcass, he handed it over to the lady of the house as a capital dish, and recommended the tail to her notice as a special dainty. Mrs. Taylor had some hesitation about cooking it, and declared that it looked exactly like a large rat; but on Daniel's assurance and Walter's persuasion, she promised to get it ready for dinner.

The negro took the castoreum out of the glands, put it in a small vial with a little spirit, and carefully corked the bottle. After breakfast he mounted his horse to ride to Choctaw River, and borrow beaver traps from the settlers there. Walter would gladly have accompanied him, but when Mrs. Taylor asked him imploringly—

"Must you ride with Daniel?"

He at once gave up the design, and replied—

"Oh, no, it is not necessary. Daniel will be able to bring the traps by himself."

He employed the day in sowing some beds in the garden with vegetables for his aunt, and making the frame-work of an arbour for Amy, round which he planted beautifully-flowering lianas, which he had brought from the forest for the express purpose.

CHAPTER XII.

BEAVER TRAPPING.—THE SHE BEAR AND THE CUBS.—BRIGHT PROS-
PECTS.—DEER HUNTING.—CHASED BY A GRIZZLY.—WALTER'S
SELF-SACRIFICE.—UP A TREE.—A DESPERATE ENGAGEMENT.—
FOLLOWING THE HORSE'S TRAIL.

BEFORE sunset Daniel returned with eight beaver traps suspended from his saddle. The Choctaw settlers had most readily lent them, because the beaver had quite disappeared from among themselves. The news of Daniel and Walter's victory over the Waco Indians was received with great joy at the settlement, and the Warwicks were most pleased of all, because, as the old gentleman said, the Redskins had received a good lesson, and would not return in a hurry. The negro at once repaired and put all the traps in order, in order to begin the chase on the following morning. After the horses had been watered and brought into their night quarters, Daniel paddled the canoe to the rock, went into the fort up the ladder, and then drew the latter up after him.

The next day was terribly long both for Walter and Fred, and Charles as well, for Daniel did not intend to ride to Plum Stream to set the traps till the evening, and had promised to take the two younger boys with him. At length the negro saddled his horse, Walter followed his example, and the two foals were got ready for Charles and

Fred. The four riders divided the traps among them, and then rode off merrily, while Taylor closed the gate. It had been arranged that a few shots from the fort should serve as a summons for their immediate return, if necessary, for the wind blew towards Plum Stream, so that a shot would be certainly heard.

The riders soon reached the stream, but the dead Indians had disappeared. The horses were hastily fastened to trees, after which Daniel began setting the traps. He sunk them into the water near the bank, at spots where it was not more than half a foot deep. Then he cut a thin sprig, dipped one end of it in the castoreum, and thrust the other end into the bank, in such a manner that the moistened point emerged from the water just over the trap. Daniel had fastened a cord to each trap, with a bush at the end of it, which he laid on the bank. If during the night a beaver came to the surface and scented the castoreum, the latter would attract it, it would swim over the trap, tread upon it and be caught by the leg. Within half an hour all the traps were set at a distance of fifty yards apart, and the sportsmen went home, feeling very curious as to the number of beavers they might catch. They reached the fort shortly before sunset, and while engaged in various occupations round the large table, nothing was talked about that evening but the beavers, whose skins were so valuable.

Daniel prophesied that there would be a beaver in every trap, and that the whole colony would be captured within a week.

Day had scarce dawned ere the four were again

mounted, and galloping towards Plum Stream. On reaching it, the boys did not even take the time to fasten up their horses, but begged Daniel to do it, while they hastened to the first trap and at once missed the bush from the bank. It was floating on the water not far from the beaver-house, and hence the trap must have been dragged thither by the captive. Daniel came up with a long pole, to the end of which he had fastened a wooden hook, and with it drew the bush towards him. The latter was then pulled on land, and when the trap followed the rope, there was really a dead beaver in it. It had been caught by a fore-leg, had dived with the trap, and had violently attacked it, for its bites were visible on the iron, and the points of its teeth were broken off. The heavy iron had kept it down, and drowned it, for the beaver can go without air only for a certain time. The delight of the boys was unbounded, and they ran in the greatest excitement to the second trap, which they also found carried off. In this one, however, there was not a beaver, but an otter, for these animals are also attracted by castoreum.

Thus they went from one trap to the other, and, as the negro had predicted, there was a beaver in every one of them. Seven of these valuable animals, whose skins are equally well covered with hair at all seasons, and one otter were the rich booty of the past night, and the traps were again set with renewed hopes.

The next night produced only four beavers, and Daniel and Walter, who this time had ridden out alone to examine the traps, chose other spots for them, so that the last was in the vicinity of the destroyed dam. When they rode

out again on the next morning to see what they had caught, they separated ere they reached Plum Stream; Walter took the straight line to the dam, and the negro rode up to the small lake, which the stream formed above. Walter entered the forest by an old, rarely used buffalo path, which seemed to lead to the beaver-dam, but was greatly overgrown with bushes and thorns, so that the young sportsman had great difficulty in forcing his way through. The path, however, soon became clearer, and the horse advanced rapidly, until the rider checked it, as an old fallen pine tree completely blocked the road.

The distance to it was not more than ten yards, and Walter looked to the right and left, to see on which side he could most easily ride round the tree. At this moment a large mass of bushes and dry leaves rose on the other side of the tree, there was a rustling and crashing, and the head of an enormous black bear suddenly appeared in the midst of the dark, tangled heap. On noticing the movement behind the tree Walter had raised his rifle and pointed at it, and he had hardly noticed the monster's head ere he fired. With the crack of the rifle the whole upheaved mass sank, and Walter turned his horse round and galloped along the path toward the prairie, as fast as its windings allowed him. He listened and listened, but no suspicious sound reached his ear; still he would not venture to ride back into the forest without Daniel.

He had not waited long, however, ere the negro's loud voice shouted his name from the wood, and he replied with all his might. In a few minutes Daniel came out of the

thicket on foot, and breathlessly cried out to his young friend—

"Thank goodness, my alarm was unfounded. When I heard your shot, I thought of the detested Wacos, and I was afraid lest they had fired at you. I left my horse behind, as I could not bring it through the thicket, and I really arrived here quicker than I thought possible. What did you fire at?"

"A very large bear; it got up before me from under a fallen tree, and when I saw its head I pulled the trigger; then I bolted, and haven't heard anything further from the animal," Walter replied.

"Well, I do not think it will have much more to say for itself; you probably aroused it from its winter sleep, and if you had not wounded it mortally, it would soon have been after you. We will go and look for it—follow me."

With these words Daniel cocked his rifle, and walked rapidly along the buffalo path through the thicket, cutting away with his bowie-knife the creepers, so as to give Walter a free passage.

"There is the tree, Daniel; look out!" Walter shouted, and also got his rifle ready to fire; but the negro said laughingly to him—

"You have given Master Bruin too strong a sleeping draught for him to come out of his hole again. Do you stay there, while I creep round the tree and look for the entrance."

Daniel leapt into the thicket and soon re-appeared some distance off, in front of the tree.

"There seems to be a hole under the tree, covered over

with fir-branches," he shouted to his companion, and then threw a log of wood at the trunk with the words, "Halloa, my fine fellow, will you be good enough to get up."

"There is really something moving under the brush-wood," he exclaimed shortly after, and raised his rifle; after a pause of anxious watching, he said, however—

"Do you know what I think? You have shot an old she bear, and her cubs are running about among the leaves. We will make sure."

The negro walked close up to the tree, and peeped through the branches with his rifle held out before him.

"It is exactly as I told you; here is the old lady's hind paw poking out; she is lying on her back, and two wee bears are sitting on her. We will catch them alive, as they will give you any amount of amusement."

While Daniel was saying this, he rested his rifle against a tree, and bent down over the hole, from which he took two little bears, no larger than rabbits. Walter had leapt from his horse and hurried to Daniel, when he laughed heartily on seeing the little creatures, which took his finger in their mouths and sucked it. His companion removed the bushes and leaves, and the whole of the she-bear was visible. Walter was obliged to help him in removing it from the hole, a task which demanded all their strength.

It was an enormous animal, weighing at least seven hundred pounds. Walter's bullet had entered its skull from behind. Daniel then went down alone to the stream, in order to examine the traps, while Walter remained with the cubs to keep them from running away. At the end of an hour the negro returned to his comrade, leading his

horse, from whose saddle-bow four beavers hung, These were laid by the side of the bear, a cloth was spread over them to keep wild beasts aloof, and the hunters mounted their horses, each taking a cub in his arms. They thus reached the fort, where the little orphans caused great fun, and excited both Mrs. Taylor and Amy's compassion by their familiarity and humorous ways. Daniel soon put the horses in the light cart, and drove with Walter to the forest to fetch home the booty. On reaching the skirt of the wood, he took out one of the horses, led it up to the bear, and made it drag the latter out into the prairie. With a great effort the heavy animal was at length loaded. Daniel fetched the beavers, and in half an hour they reached the fort safe and sound. Mrs. Taylor was very glad to have the valuable bear's grease ; the meat was salted and smoked, and the huge skin was dried to serve as a carpet under the table in the keeping-room.

As Daniel had foreboded, the entire beaver colony was captured within a fortnight. Four and thirty beavers were killed, and not a trail of such an animal was to be found. The value of the cleaned and dried skins amounted to two hundred dollars, which Warwick paid Taylor for them. in the hope of making a little profit for himself, in selling them to a peltry dealer.

The inundation had evidently done the maize field good, for the plants shot up remarkably strong. The delight of the settlers at this glorious prospect for their first harvest was indescribable, for it freed them from any anxiety about food for the future. Between the ridges of maize, the colonists had sown sweet potatoes, beans, pumpkins, and

melons, so that the crop promised to be abundant and varied.

"I only wish we could give the poor people at home our superabundance of provisions," Taylor said, one evening, when they were all seated round the table. "In England the weather at this time is probably wretched in the extreme, while we, on the contrary, daily fetch fresh vegetables from the garden, and the trees and shrubs which lost their last year's foliage only a few weeks ago, are already putting forth young buds. And what an abundance of game we have found here! We can see, almost daily, hundreds of deer and antelopes grazing on the prairie before us, beside the thousands of buffaloes which frequently cover the country, far as eye can reach."

"You musn't forget the bears," Mrs. Taylor interrupted him, "for they are the most valuable article in my housekeeping."

"And yet the bears have decreased in numbers here, compared with the time when no settler lived on the Choctaw," Daniel remarked "I often hunted here with the Indians among whom I lived, and can remember very well that we shot a dozen heavy bears in one day on this river, and hence it derives its name. We also came across a grizzly bear once; the frightful animal killed one of our young warriors, whose horse it caught up though it was going at a racing pace, pulled him down from it, and tore him in pieces."

"That is fearful; but there are no animals of that sort here now, I hope?" Mrs. Taylor said in horror.

"Even at that time they were strangers in this flat

country. Their home is in the mountains situated further west, whence they come down in the winter, when food grows scarce there, to the low lands, and at such times they will prowl about the forest on Red River, and even come as far as here. The settlers, however, make every effort to get hold of them, for there is nothing more dangerous for themselves and their herds. A grizzly bear will take a two-year-old filly in its arms and carry it off; it can catch up any horse too in the end, for its strength holds out longer than that of any other animal. I have helped to kill a grizzly which weighed close on two thousand pounds. May heaven keep them from us, or it would be bad for our cattle."

"Why, a grizzly must be a thorough monster," Taylor remarked, "and it would be almost impossible to escape from one."

"Unless you can get up a tree. Luckily, the grizzly bear cannot climb," Daniel replied.

"Will a bullet pierce its hide?" Walter asked.

"Certainly; but twenty bullets are often required to kill it, unless one accidentally hits the right spot," the negro answered.

"Well, that spot may be hit," Walter remarked, laughingly.

"Walter, Walter, you are really growing too daring. May heaven guard you from ever coming across such a fearful animal!" Mrs. Taylor said with great anxiety.

"The safest shot is at its head—that is, when it is not far off, otherwise you must aim just behind the shoulder-blade and very low down, as the bear's heart is in the chest

cavity," Daniel again said, and then added consolingly, "we shall, however, never have such a visitor here, for the grizzly bear is rarely seen in the vicinity of settlements."

As the maize now demanded the entire attention of the colonists, they employed the time in killing some more trees round the field, and lopping the bushes, so that they might enlarge it in the coming autumn. They also felled other trees, and cut them into logs twelve feet in length, which they intended to employ in extending the fence. This was the reason why for a whole week not one of them went out hunting, and no fresh game was put on the table. Mrs. Taylor remarked one evening at supper that she would like a joint of fresh meat, and Walter readily offered to ride out the next morning and shoot a deer. Fred and Charles begged to be allowed to accompany him, to which Taylor consented, on condition that they did not go far from the fort.

The two younger lads were by this time good riders, as they practised almost daily in taking the horses to water; and very frequently in the evening, when the kine did not return home betimes, they would ride out into the prairie and drive them, which gave occasion for many a wild chase. Taylor had procured from Warwick two Mexican saddles for his boys, the seat on which is much safer and more secure, because they have a high saddle-bow and a very raised back. The boys were also excellent shots, though not such practised sportsmen as Walter, for Taylor was too timid to let them ride any distance alone. On the following morning they were to have their first hunt on horseback, and Walter was to guide and look after them,

so that no accident happened ; for Daniel was very busy in the field, and the three boys could easily bring down a deer in the vicinity of the fort.

Fred and Charles could hardly wait for daybreak, and when its first gleam appeared it found them employed in preparing for the chase. They were equipped precisely like Walter, except that they had no revolvers, a brace of which Walter buckled round him on this day, and no beautiful jaguar hide fastened over their saddle.

The two cart-horses were saddled for them after breakfast—Taylor himself examined their bridles ; and when he helped his two sons to mount, he again recommended the utmost caution, and said to Walter—

“ You will be sure and take care of them ; but promise me one thing—not to hunt any buffaloes. Do you hear, my boy ? ”

“ Certainly not, uncle ; we shall shoot a deer, and come back directly,” Walter replied in his honest, true-hearted way.

“ Well, then, be off,” Taylor said, while his wife walked up to Walter’s horse, and said, as she squeezed his hand—

“ Walter, take care of my children, and come back soon.”

“ The dry grass is too tall, young master, for you to be able to ride up close to the game,” the negro shouted to Walter. “ You had better stop your horses, hobble them, and stalk the deer on foot. You can let Fred and Charles have the first shot to-day, and give them a helping hand if they require it.”

Walter promised the negro to follow his instructions,

and the boys merrily trotted down the hill into the tall grass. It came up to the girths, and was withered, while the young stalks were already a foot high among it, and formed a fresh green carpet on the ground. Walter proceeded in the direction of the wood on Plum Stream, because he had always seen the most game there. On the road deer continually leapt up from the tall grass, and fled before the approaching riders, but Walter tried in vain to notice any game grazing in the distance, which they could stalk.

They had reached the extremity of the forest, which only consisted of a few lofty trees, and Walter checked his horse to look whether there was a deer under them. After surveying the forest for some time in vain through his pocket-telescope, he said to his companions—

“It is strange that there are no deer here to-day, for I have hardly ever been here without seeing several. It is so easy to keep up to them from tree to tree. It's of no use, we must ride out into the prairie to those islands of trees, which rise above the grass like a blue mist. Let us ride on, for we are safe to find game soon.”

With these words Walter guided his horse from the end of the forest westward into the prairie, and Fred and Charles rode on either side of him. They had been carefully looking about for game for nearly a quarter of an hour, when Walter perceived a herd of large deer a long way ahead, tranquilly grazing and playing together.

“There is a herd over there, look, where the two mosquito trees grow out of the grass.”

"Yes, yes, I see them," his two companions said simultaneously.

"It is a long way off, but we can ride much nearer to them. They are heavy deer, I can see their antlers from here. Bend down over your horses' necks, so that your black hats may not betray us," Walter said, as he hastily bent down himself.

They rode slowly forward, and the outline of the deer became with each moment more distinct.

"There are more ahead," Walter began again after a while.

"Had we not better dismount?" Fred asked in his eagerness.

"No, not yet; I will tell you when it is time. Keep down over your horses' necks," Walter replied, as he looked along his horse's head at the game. Suddenly the cream-colour started and bounded forward, while throwing up its head with a snort, and looking back. Walter at once did the same.

"Good gracious! what is that coming toward us from the forest? Look at it—it is a bear, but not a black one—it is a grizzly!" Walter cried, holding in his horse violently, while the cart-horses also attempted to bolt.

"Oh, Walter, what shall we do? It will catch us up. Let us gallop back to the fort," Frederick said in terror, and Charley stammered, "Oh, Walter, dear Walter, do help us!"

"It has cut off our return to the fort. But keep calm, it cannot catch us up, for our horses are too good. Give your horses the bridle, and follow me, but do not urge them

too much, and sit firm in the saddle. There is no cause for alarm, for the grizzly shan't catch us," Walter cried, and loosened the bridle of his horse, which galloped through the tall dry grass, closely followed by the colts. The animals had evidently recognized the terrible enemy, in spite of the great distance; for in their mad flight they turned their heads first to the right and then to the left, to look back at the bear, which was dashing through the grass with enormous bounds, and kept on quite as fast as themselves.

"We are leaving it behind!" Walter now cried to his brothers, in order to calm them, although a glance at the bear convinced him that it was as close to them as at the first moment of flight. He held back his horse with might and main, as it seemed to him that the others could not keep up with him.

"Now give them the reins and urge them on, we shall soon be in safety," Walter shouted, as he looked round at his brothers and at the same time cast a glance at the fearful animal, which constantly kept up with them.

The cart-horses could go no faster, as Walter clearly saw, and he knew that his horse would have borne him away from them with ease; but he held it in, so that he was only twenty yards ahead of his companions. On they galloped without a check, up hill and down hill, but the distance between them and the pursuing monster was not in the slightest degree reduced. Mile after mile was left behind; the horses were covered with perspiration—white patches of foam flew from their bits, and they panted heavily through their widely-expanded blood-red nostrils. Walter inces-

santly cheered his brothers, and they urged on their horses with spur and whip ; but their speed began to decrease, and the bear was drawing nearer. The wooded oasis now rose quite distinctly in front of the fugitives, and Walter guided his horse thither. He did not yet know in what way the thick coppice would help them ; but if there was a chance of salvation, it was to be sought there. They drew nearer and nearer to the wood, and nearer and nearer came the furious foe. They were still one hundred yards from the chapparal, when Walter checked his horse, so that his brothers came up to his side.

"Now we are saved," he shouted to them ; "so soon as we have passed this coppice, do you both go round it to the left, so that the bear cannot see you, and I will remain a little behind, till it is close to me, and then make my horse gallop off to the right. The bear will follow me, but I shall soon be out of its sight, and then I will come home. You hurry on as quick as you can from the wood to the fort, and tell them that the bear could not catch us, but that I shall not be home till late."

The wood was reached. Walter stopped behind his brothers, and cried to them—

"Forward—gallop round the wood, and then home. I shall soon be after you."

As he said this, he pulled his horse, which reared frantically, for the bear was racing up, and was now scarce a hundred yards off. Walter looked at it, but did not tremble, for at the same moment his brothers disappeared round the wood. He then gave his horse the reins once more, and galloped out into the prairie to the right of the coppice.



"Forward—gallop round the wood, and then home. I shall soon be after you."—Page 208.



He still kept his eye fixed on the monster, however, to see whether it would follow him.

A cry of "Thank heaven!" escaped from Walter's lips when he saw the bear come after him, and he then shouted to the cream-colour to do its best. The brave beast scarce felt the bridle free, scarce heard its master's encouraging cry, ere it flew away, as if its hoofs spurned the ground, and the bear was left far behind.

"Thank heaven!" Walter said once more, on perceiving that his enemy could not follow him so rapidly, and he repeated it on looking back to the thicket, and seeing his brothers galloping on a long way on the other side of it.

"Now, then, you shan't catch me, you ugly brute," Walter thought, and patted his horse's moist neck. The bear was soon left some thousand yards behind by the determined lad, and he began to breathe more freely. He now allowed his horse to do as it liked, for it was certain that the bear could not catch it up. Still he constantly looked back to the grizzly, in the hope that it would give up the chase. The bear, however, neither altered its bounds nor its steady pace, but dashed along the track which the horse had made in the grass. The thicket disappeared behind Walter in the blue mist, and before him rose on the prairie the outline of a wood, which ran for a long distance along the western horizon. This must be the wood of which Daniel had so often told him that it consisted of isolated live oaks, whose crowns formed a thick roof of foliage, while the ground was covered with a fine carpet of grass. Walter must try to reach this wood, he thought, and now urged on his horse, whose speed had relaxed, and the boy fancied that

the bear had drawn rather nearer. The horse at once obeyed its rider's challenge, but only for a short time, and then its speed decreased again. Its leaps grew shorter and more laborious, its breathing was becoming heavy, and Walter perceived, to his terror, that the strength of the noble animal was rapidly failing it. There was no alteration in the speed of the bear.

The possibility that the fearful monster might catch him up, was becoming more and more a certainty in the boy's mind, and the thought of self-defence alone occupied him, and restored him all his strength of will.

The shot through the head and the one through the heart must succeed, Walter felt convinced, and then he and his horse would be saved. But supposing that the bullets did not hit the right spot? The grizzly bear could not climb, by the way, Daniel had told him, and the oak wood was close at hand ; a tree would offer him protection, and save his horse ! The boy now drove both spurs into the heaving flanks of his faithful steed, and away it dashed, once more leaving the bear far behind. The oak trees were reached, and Walter galloped through them, looking around for a tree that would answer his purpose. He was still some thousand yards ahead of his grim pursuer, when he suddenly stopped his horse in front of an oak, and at the same instant leaped out of the saddle.

A blow with the whip, and the giant form of the bear dashing along in the distance, urged the cream-colour to wild flight, while Walter hung his rifle on his back, and clambered up the rough trunk of the oak. In a few

seconds he was standing on the first branches, which were about fifteen feet above the ground, and took his rifle from his back, to get it ready for use. At this moment he heard the heavy steps of the bear approaching, the ground groaned beneath its weight, and Walter could distinguish its loud panting.

At this moment the grizzly came through the oaks, straight at the tree on which Walter was standing. But if it dashed past and followed the horse, the latter would be lost. The bear was now rushing with clumsy but enormous bounds between the nearest trees. Walter fired, and then took his hat from his head, which he hurled at the monster's feet, just at the moment when it reached the tree; with a dull roar of rage, the bear attacked the hat and dug its teeth and claws in it; but instantaneously there was another shot from the tree and the bear rolled over. It was up again in a moment, and looked up at its foe with gnashing teeth. It sprang up the trunk of the tree and struck out with its huge paws, but could not quite reach the branch on which Walter was standing, and the latter saw that blood was streaming from its head and side. With a furious outbreak of rage the bear seized the trunk of the tree, and shook it as if trying to tear it out of the ground. Walter, however, had drawn his revolver, held it at the roaring brute, and fired down its widely opened throat.

After the shot the bear still clung to the tree and uttered a hollow savage roar. But Walter pointed the revolver at the centre of the brute's head, and after he had fired, it fell back at the foot of the tree, quivering in all its limbs.

"Thank the Lord for all His mercies !" Walter cried, as he clasped his hands, holding his weapons against his chest, and looked up to heaven with tears of gratitude. Then he looked down again ; the monster was lying stretched out at his feet, but life had not yet quite left it. Walter thrust the revolver into his belt, and loaded his rifle again, though it was a very difficult job ; for, before he went down to the animal, he must be certain that it was dead. He, therefore, put a rifle ball through its skull, after which every movement ceased, and Walter descended from the tree. For some minutes he stood in amazement by the side of the colossal corpse, but then thought of his horse, and at once resolved to follow its track. He quickly loaded, and sought the track of the horse, which he hastily followed, for the grass did not check his speed.

The sun was high in the heavens, and Walter was greatly fatigued by his unwonted exertions ; the shadow, however, afforded by the thick foliage of the evergreen oaks, and the cool breeze that blew under it, did him good, and enabled him to regain his strength. The grass was very fine and not tall, so that he could easily recognize every step of his horse and follow it without interruption, while his eyes wandered anxiously over the plain in the hope of catching a glimpse of the beloved animal.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RETURN OF THE TWO BOYS.—THE DESPAIR OF THE FAMILY.—
DANIEL SETS OUT.—LOST ON THE PRAIRIE.—THE HURRICANE.—
THE PRAIRIE ON FIRE.—THE FLIGHT.—THE SWAMP.—WALTER
FINDS A REFUGE.—RUFERT FLIES.—THE HERDS OF WILD BEASTS.

ABOUT this time the rescued brothers approached the fort. The cart-horses could hardly keep up their pace, however much the boys' whips and spurs urged them on.

The lads constantly turned their anxious glances back over the extensive prairie, and fancied that they must at the next moment see the terrible animal bounding after them. The horses, too, had not forgotten the monster, for they often looked round, snorting with terror, and then dashed on as if they wished to race till they fell dead. The sight of the fort restored the courage of both the horses and their riders, and caused them to forget their exhaustion, and with flying manes and hanging bridles they exerted their last strength in galloping through the tall grass to the familiar hill.

Mrs. Taylor had waited dinner for nearly an hour beyond the usual time in expectation of the boys' return, and now went out in front of the fort to her husband and Daniel, who had been sitting there for some time to watch for the young hunters. Nothing was as yet to be seen of them, and Amy joined the party just as Mrs. Taylor was saying—

"Where can the boys be so long, they promised not to go far?"

"They have probably shot a deer, and are following it. You always know when you go out hunting, but never when you will return," Daniel remarked sententiously.

"How strange, though, that we can see nothing of them and have heard no shot," Taylor said, with evident anxiety.

"I hope there has been no accident; we ought not to have let them ride out alone," Mrs. Taylor remarked.

"Walter is with them, and is as good a protector as if I had been there. Do not be alarmed, he will bring the two boys back all right," the negro interposed.

"I see something coming there; I fancy it is the colts," Amy suddenly said, and pointed to the flat distance.

"There they are, at full gallop; they have shot something," Daniel cried, and held his hand over his eyes, to be able to see more distinctly.

"Good heavens! I do not see the cream-colour, I can only recognize the two cart-horses," the negro exclaimed after a while; and then added with a trembling voice, "that is no chase; it looks to me more like a flight. Something has occurred, they are coming straight toward us, and Walter is not with them!"

"Let us trust in heaven that no misfortune has happened to him," Mrs. Taylor said, and clasped her trembling hands.

Silently, and almost petrified by terror, all fixed their eyes on the two rapidly approaching boys, and their alarm, their horror was increased by every leap the horses took over the grass.

They soon recognized also in the movements of the horses their great exhaustion, that the lads were urging them on with their whips, and that the white foam was flying in patches from the bits.

"Where is Walter? in heaven's name where is Walter?" all cried in one voice to the boys, as the latter dashed up the hill; and all repeated the cry, when Taylor and Daniel had lifted them from their saddles.

"A grizzly bear," was all that the horrified boys could stammer, as they threw themselves with a violent burst of tears into their parents' arms.

Daniel, however, had scarce heard the word "bear" ere he rushed into the grass, liberated his horse from the piquet rope, and ran back with it to the fort.

In a few minutes he had saddled it, seized his weapons, and went into the house to obtain further information about Walter's fate, before he set out in search of him.

He found the whole family weeping and bewailing, for the boys had by this time told the whole terrible story. The Taylors greeted the faithful negro with loud sobs, and reproached themselves most bitterly for having given their assent to the hunt.

"All is not lost yet," Daniel said, consolingly; "the cream-colour is a splendid horse, and Walter a good rider. He went in the direction of the oak wood, and was aware that a grizzly cannot climb. I do not yet give up hopes that heaven has protected him."

With these words the negro ran out to his horse, swung himself into the saddle, and galloped off toward the end of the forest on Plum Stream. In a very short time

he reached it, and recognized there the enormous tracks of the bear. He followed them at a gallop to the wooded oasis, where Walter saved his brothers, and attracted the blood-thirstiness of the animal to himself. Here Daniel found the track of his horse as well as that of the bear, and both led him to the oak wood.

The sky had become covered with greyish clouds, and a violent wind had sprung up from the south, when the negro reached the wood, under whose leafy arcade the ever-prevailing gloom was heightened by the approach of evening. Still Daniel was enabled to see the track of the horse and the bear, although he was obliged to pay more attention to them here than in the tall grass of the prairie, where the torn and trampled stalks revealed it for a long distance ahead. He was obliged, therefore, to put a restraint on his haste and longing, and ride at a foot pace, lest he should lose the trail. It soon became so dark that he could no longer perceive it from his horse's back, and he got down and led the animal. With a heavy heart he went from tree to tree, and tried to overcome the thought that he should suddenly reach the spot where his young friend had fallen a victim to his noble heart, and had been murdered by the terrible animal. On account of the increasing gloom he was compelled to walk in a stooping posture, in order to notice the bear's track ; but he advanced with all possible speed, till he suddenly looked up and his eye fell on the killed monster.

"Saved, saved ; my young master is saved !" the negro cried aloud to heaven, and raised his folded hands ; then he drew his horse at a trot after him up to the bear, by the

side of which he knelt down to convince himself that it had been killed by Walter's bullets. In his delight he sent his shrill hunting cry echoing through the wood, and discharged both barrels of his rifle. But no other answer was given him but the melancholy hoot of an owl; the negro, however, laughed heartily and said, "you false-speaking brute, I have better news of my young master."

Walter was already too far away from Daniel to hear his shots.

During the entire afternoon he had indefatigably followed the hoof-marks of his horse, first right, then left, then forwards, then backwards, so that at last he did not know in what direction he was going, as the sun was overclouded, and he had unfortunately left his compass at home. For the moment, however, it was all the same to him where he went, for he was still on the track of his horse, and that was the best guide he could now desire. For a long time the marks showed that the horse had been flying; but then it settled down into a trot, and finally into a walk. About the same time when Daniel found the bear, Walter began to have a difficulty in following his horse's track, and he looked up to the grey sky with a sad, despairing heart, for he was afraid that a heavy rain would wash away every sign of the way which the horse had followed. He did not think of himself, he felt no fatigue, hunger, or thirst; the eager desire to find his brave steed again overcame any other feeling in him. At length he lost the track, and it was too late to recover it; hence he resolved to sleep under an old oak, and renew his search on the next morning.

He rested his rifle against the tree and was on the point of removing his game bag, when he fancied that he saw something moving in the distance under the oaks. He started, for the hope that had hitherto accompanied him, was aroused again in all its strength. He did not take his eyes off the spot between the black trunks, and something moved again there. He hurriedly seized his rifle and leapt cautiously from tree to tree toward the moving object, which continually became clearer, till he suddenly recognized the spotted jaguar skin on the indistinct form of his horse.

"Rupert! Rupert!" he shouted to his horse, in order to make himself known betimes, so that the terrified animal might not fly from him, and then he walked nearer and nearer to it with soothing words of affection.

The horse had soon recognized him, neighed gladly in reply, and when Walter walked up to it with the words, "Yes, Rupert, darling Rupert, it is I; are you pleased to have me with you again?" the animal neighed again and laid its head on its young master's shoulder.

Walter was on the point of removing the saddle and bridle, when he noticed a strip of bush further on under the oaks, and preferred to bivouac there, because he could not be so easily seen in the thicket, and the darkness did not sufficiently conceal him where he was. He led his horse up to the bushes, and found among them, to his great joy, a spring of fresh water, which had probably attracted Rupert to the spot, for the horse had already been there, as its hoof-marks on the soft ground testified.

For Walter, this discovery was a great comfort, for now

that his anxiety about the horse was pacified, he felt his exhaustion and a burning thirst.

He threw himself down by the side of the spring, and when he had refreshed himself to his heart's content, he removed Rupert's saddle and bridle, and bound him, with the rope fastened round his neck for the purpose, to a sapling, so that he could graze on the rich wild oats that covered the soil between the oak trees.

Then Walter took off his hunting accoutrements, spread his jaguar skin under an old oak, and lay down to take the rest he needed so much. Mrs. Taylor had given him in the morning, as she always did when he was going to hunt, a lump of bread and some meat; he took the food out of his game-bag, and pacified his hunger, which was now beginning to be sensible.

Walter fancied that he had never enjoyed a meal so much, and he felt quite happy in his mind, for he thought of his rescued brothers and the delight which their return to the fort, after incurring such a danger, must have produced. He was certainly aware that the Taylors would be greatly alarmed about himself; but he had sent a message to them that he should probably not be home till late, and he intended to return to the fort at break of day.

But whereabouts did the fort lie? About this Walter was not decided, but he consoled himself by the thought that the sun would shine in the morning, and he need only ride towards its point of ascension in order to reach Bear Creek; for the latter flowed from south to north into the Red River.

Easy on this point, and with the blessed conscious-

ness that he performed a good deed, he soon sank back on to his saddle, and fell into a sweet invigorating sleep.


The wind increased in violence with every hour ; it whistled and howled through the old oaks, shook their mighty branches, and scattered their dry wood far around on the earth ; but Walter did not hear what was going on around him, or feel how the wind was sporting with his curls. He slept the sleep of the righteous, and was dreaming of his brothers. Day, however, scarce broke ere he awoke and looked around him in amazement, for at the first moment he did not know where he was.

Rupert neighed loudly on noticing his master's movement, and Walter soon woke up and ran to his horse to lead it to another grazing place. At the same time he heard a little lower down the brook the gobbling sound with which wild turkeys salute the daylight. As Walter had no more food with him, he seized his rifle and hurried through the bushes toward the turkeys. On reaching the last bushes he saw at least fifty of these immense birds running about under the trees.

Their pace was as fast as that of a horse, but Walter quickly picked out one of the largest cock-birds among them, and sent a bullet after it. The bird fell, flapping its wings violently ; and Walter carried it back to his camping ground. Here he at once lit a fire, cut off the fattest slices from the bird's breast, spitted them on a stick, and planted them before the fire to roast. The breakfast was soon ready, and Walter enjoyed it ; but so soon as it was ended he hastened to prepare for riding home, as he

knew that the family would be anxiously expecting his return.

Rupert had enjoyed himself extensively among the wild oats ; he was rapidly saddled, and Walter leapt on his back, full of joyful thoughts about his reception at the fort. The sun had not yet appeared, the sky was covered with a dull monotonous gray, and the wind blew with such force through the trees that their branches dashed wildly about, and creaked and groaned again. Walter resolved to follow his horse's track back to the bear, for from that point he would have no difficulty in finding his way home. But the trampled grass had been raised again during the night over the hoof-marks by the wind, and it was impossible to find the track. Walter looked about him with some embarrassment, for he really did not know in which direction to ride. Still, he fancied he could remember the route from which he had first seen the horse on the previous evening, and he bent his steps in that direction, for ride he must. He set his horse on a trot, and looked down at the ground, in the hope of finding one hoof-mark from the previous day ; but, though he was most careful, he did not succeed. Indeed, he could not have done so, for he was riding exactly in the opposite direction to the one he believed he was following ; he was going west, while the fort lay behind him to the east. When he fancied he had arrived near the bear, he strained his eyes to the utmost to discover it, but in vain. He rode and rode for hours in the same direction, but saw nothing of the bear, and suddenly found himself at the skirt of the oak wood, where it joined the prairie.



With perfect confidence that he was on the right road for Bear Creek, he rode out into the tall grass, whose long stalks the wind had matted together. It was fatiguing work for the horse in the hollows of the prairie, because there the grass came up to the saddle ; but on the elevations Walter encouraged it to hasten on, and the animal willingly obeyed its master's urging. A wooded knoll now caught Walter's attention, and he welcomed it as the copse which had rescued his brothers. He now felt certain that he should find his way to the fort without difficulty. He drew nearer and nearer to it, and felt the more convinced that it was the same little wood near which he had parted from his brothers on the previous evening. When he reached it he even fancied that he could recognize the individual trees, and it was not surprising he could not see the bear's track, owing to the storm. He rode on quite contented, but was obliged to press his hat firmly on his forehead, lest it should fly off. The wind rose more and more, until about mid-day it blew across the unbounded prairie from the south like an unchained hurricane. In vain did Walter try to recognize in the distance the forest on Bear Creek, and an uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty as to the direction he had taken involuntarily forced itself on his mind. He now noticed, too, that an unusual number of animals was moving about the prairie with a restlessness which he had never before seen so general among them. They constantly came up at a tremendous pace from the south, and seemed to trouble themselves about Walter less than usual. He had been gazing in surprise for some time to windward, when he suddenly perceived a dark stripe

over the distant horizon. At the first moment he took it for a rising cloud, but then it did not appear to him like an ordinary cloud, for it was a level long stripe, which speedily rose over the extreme verge of the prairie, and constantly grew of a darker hue. "That is no cloud; but what can it be coming up with the storm?" Walter thought, and saw more and more animals dashing up. Suddenly the idea flashed across his mind, "Suppose it were a prairie fire?" He had scarcely thought this ere he attained certainty on the subject, for the description which Daniel had so often given him of this scene of horror perfectly agreed with the one he now had before him.

The black stripe was composed of smoke-clouds, which were now visible on nearly one-third of the horizon, and extended further and further behind Walter.

At the same time the storm altered its course and blew a little more from the eastward. Walter still fostered the hope that he was steering for Bear Creek, even though he might strike it lower down and nearer its confluence with the Red River. In any case he could not remain where he was, and flight alone could save him and his steed from an awful death in the flames of the burning grass. Rupert, too, seemed to forebode the menacing danger rising with the columns of smoke, for he looked round at them with a snort, and pulled at the bridle to get away. Walter, however, had scarce given the animal its head, ere it flew far ahead with him, as if wishful to leave the storm-wind behind it.

Walter was carried at a headlong pace past flying deer, scattered buffaloes and wild horses, and, so far as he could see, the plain became every moment more animated

Here a horse fell, there an antelope, a deer, or a buffalo; their companions, however, flew onward and left them to their fate.

Rupert's strength had not yet begun to give way, fear and horror still drove him on, and despair continually gave fresh strength to his limbs. Still Walter felt that the movements of the noble animal were growing heavier, and with terror he heard through the roaring of the hurricane the deep-drawn breathing of his horse. Ere long its bounds grew shorter, its legs were no longer raised so high over the tall dry grass, they parted its tangled stalks with difficulty, and exhaustion was displayed in its relaxed speed. The flames and the army of wild beasts were evidently drawing nearer to Walter, and with horror he gazed first at the flames still far behind him, and then at the gloomy plain before him. Where, how was he to find safety for himself and his favourite steed?

It could only be sought far, far ahead—a wood, a stream, this was what Walter longed for despairingly, and he dug both spurs with a feeling of regret into the heaving dank flanks of his wearied steed. Rupert made a frantic effort and dashed along for about a mile through the grass; but then his strength relaxed in the same ratio, and his breathing grew more and more difficult. The shortest delay, however, was certain, inevitable death; forwards was the cry; and once again Walter urged his steed to wild flight, and once again the faithful beast responded to its master's challenge. It dashed down into a narrow valley and had reached the other side with a final effort, when it sank with its rider, and turned its head to him



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with a glance, as if bidding him farewell. Walter sprang up with horror, and clasped his arms round the neck of the beloved animal. How could he help it—how could he save himself?

He looked back at the darting, rapidly approaching flames; saw the black forms coming nearer at frantic speed, and heard the thunder with which they made the earth groan beneath them. He dared not dally here—one short farewell of Rupert, and Walter hurried over the hill, rifle in hand. He had, however, hardly gone forty yards when he noticed a swamp in a hollow, which seemed to begin a short distance from an old colossal mosquito-tree. Walter hurried to the tree, which stood on the bank and hung over the water, that bubbled up in the shape of a clear stream from beneath its roots, and ran to join the swamp. A gracious Providence had guided him here to save him, Walter felt with a thankful heart, and with perfect confidence in its further assistance. He took one more glance at the cavity under the roots of the tree, and then ran back to his horse. In a few seconds he had unfastened the saddle-girth, taken it off the horse, as well as the bridle and neck rope, and carried them quickly to the hollow in the bank. He now called to mind that Daniel had told him that in a prairie fire the grass should be fired where it grew short, and thus provide a spot where the approaching flames would obtain no sustenance; but at this moment he thought of Rupert; for would he not thus himself kill the faithful steed? No, that was impossible; he would sooner become a victim to the flames himself. He took off his hat, filled it at the spring, ran with it to the

exhausted animal, and poured the water over its head. The terrified creature managed to rise, tottered forward, and reached the swamp, where it again fell.

"Thank heaven!" Walter exclaimed, as he saw the water plashing over the horse from the tall reedy grass; for, possibly, it might be protected there from the rapidly-approaching fire. At this moment he again heard the thunder of the animals, and already fancied he could see them trampling his favourite beneath their hoofs. It was not in his power, however, to do more for the horse, and the ground trembling beneath him warned him to provide for his own safety. He darted back to the tree, and into the hollow in the water under it. He laid himself down, so that his clothes were quite saturated, but thrust his baggage and weapons far into the bank under the roots, after enlarging the whole with his hands and knife. Then he dipped the jaguar skin in the stream, in order to cover himself with it, so soon as the fire came up; for Daniel had told him how the Indians caught by a prairie fire wrapped themselves in a fresh buffalo hide to protect themselves from the fire.

The bank was rather high, the grass on its side and round the water could not burn, as it was still green, and the bushes growing on the banks also afforded a protection. He was also safe from the flying bands of animals, and his sole fear was now directed to his faithful steed. The latter, however, had slightly recovered, and was raising its head, as if to look over the bank at the roaring sound, which was rapidly drawing nearer.

The air became dark, a thick black shower of ashes

blew over the swamp, and deprived Walter of all view of the distance; but he could still perceive Rupert, as the storm carried the ashes high over his head. At the same time the trembling of the earth announced the coming of the wild animals, and the thunder of their footsteps, and the fearful sound of their roaring and yelling were mingled with the deafening notes of the hurricane.

Walter caught up the jaguar skin lying in the water before him, but with a gnawing dread he kept his eyes still fixed on his horse. All at once it sprang out of the reeds, as if attacked by a fresh terror, reached the dry bank with some desperate leaps, and darted out into the darkness with which the falling ashes covered the plain. Suddenly the atmosphere became clear again; instead of black ashes, a shower of fire fell on the prairie, and sky and earth both seemed ablaze. The tree under which Walter was hidden trembled to its roots—the bank seemed ready to fall in over him—the turmoil deafened our hero, and right and left of him buffaloes, bears, horses, deer, antelopes, wolves, jaguars, and panthers leaped over one another from the top into the swamp. In a second it was filled with wild beasts, far as Walter could see, while others leapt down, and tried to escape over their backs. The contest between them was fearful, desperate, but short; for thousands of arriving animals fell over the disputants, and the track was opened for the main army of fugitives that now dashed madly along before the flames; any that hesitated or fell were trampled under foot.

Walter, at the first appearance of these formidable bands, drew a revolver, and held it tightly in his hand;

but the beasts did not notice him, as they all passed onwards. Only one immense panther turned from the turmoil toward the cave, in order to seek shelter in it. It started on seeing the spotted yellow skin of the jaguar, which Walter had drawn up over his chest; it recognized the king of the desert, and with gnashing teeth hesitated to approach him. Walter, however, pointed the revolver between its fiery eyes, and sent a bullet through its skull. The wild beast fell dead at the lad's feet without a struggle, and the report of the pistol was drowned by the thundering roar with which the flying bands of animals filled the air. Incessantly and uninterruptedly herd on herd most strangely mingled, passed on either side of Walter in close column, friend and foe side by side; and now and then Walter noticed an ocelot, or a lynx riding on the shaggy back of a colossal buffalo.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASSING OF THE FLAMES.—THE WILD STALLION.—ATTEMPTS AT TAMING.—THE START.—THE RIDE THROUGH THE DESERT.—FINDING WATER.—TRAPPING ANTELOPES.—THE FOREST.—THE CAVE.—THE RATTLESNAKES.

AT length the ranks of the animals grew clearer, and the exhausted rear-guard dashed past with the expenditure of their last strength, to be soon caught up and devoured by the flames. The fiery shower had moved onwards with the animals, but the sky had been converted into a glowing mass of heat, and the storm now brought up with it a stifling sirocco. Walter took one glance at the bank, saw the tongues of the flames rising high above it, drew back into the hole, and pulled the jaguar skin over his head. It was the moment of life or death; he held his mouth close to the ground; but for all that the stifling seemed to suffocate him; his ideas became confused, and he only heard a strange roaring and hissing in the air. The torture was soon over, however, for a cold, icy breath penetrated the cave. Walter threw off the jaguar skin, and fire and glow had disappeared. Day had returned. Walter noticed the gray sky once more over him, and saw the black pillars of smoke driven westward across the plain by the tornado. He leapt from his hiding-place on to the bank, and looked

after the advancing fire. A picture of death surrounded him. So far as he could see, the prairie, undulating a few minutes previously in the breeze, lay expanded before him as a black bare surface, and wherever he looked his eyes settled on black, singed and burned animals, many of which were still wrestling with death. Walter fell on his knees, clasped his hands, and looking up to heaven, thanked the Almighty for his wondrous preservation. Then he rose and gazed at the desolation around him: whither should he turn to find the living world again?

Tears filled his eyes, for he thought on the agony and sorrow of his friends, and felt himself so deserted, so helpless! What had become of his horse; it must have certainly perished in the flames! If he had it now, he would not have felt alarmed; for it would have borne him back to the fort without a doubt. Walter looked for the spot where Rupert had fallen with him, and saw something moving a little further on, near a mosquito-tree. He drew nearer, and perceived the head of a chestnut horse, which appeared to be raised from a hollow. Ere long he saw the whole of the animal, which was lying in a stony dry ditch, such as are frequently produced on the prairie by heavy rains. He went up to the wild horse, which was a four-year-old stallion, but did not seem to notice Walter, and was gasping for breath. It had not been singed, however, for its mane hung long and shining on its neck, and long wisps of hair fell from its forehead over its head. It was a handsome animal, although in a pitiable state, for its eyes were filled with ashes and dust. The hollow in which the horse lay had protected it from the flames that darted over it, for the

grass had been consumed in a second, and the storm had driven the fire furiously along the ground.

Walter ran back to his cave, took out his own horse's picquet rope, and hurried with it to the mustang. He fastened it round the stallion's neck, and then secured the other end to an adjacent tree. The animal was so exhausted that it offered no resistance, even when Walter spoke to it, and patted its neck and head. Then he returned to his hiding-place to fetch the horse some water. As, however, he could carry but little in his hat, he took the jaguar skin, fastened its four ends together, sunk it in the spring, and raised it again filled with water. This he carried cautiously to the horse, and poured the water over its head. The animal gave a tremendous start, and sprang on its legs, but was too weak to climb out of the hole. Walter repeated the douche several times, and at last the horse succeeded in leaping out of the hollow on to the burnt grass by the tree. Walter then shortened the rope, so that the animal could not reach the ditch again; and to his delight saw it gradually recover. Daniel had often told him that wild horses could be easily tamed by squeezing the neck for a few moments with the lasso, and then loosening the noose. He fetched his lasso, which he carried on his saddle, and laid the noose round the chestnut's neck, so that he might be able to tame it when it became wild again, on the return of its strength. For the present, however, the horse was perfectly quiet, and allowed him to do anything he liked to it.

Walter next fetched a hatful of water, and put it under the horse's mouth. The animal started back, but for all that

licked its lips, snorted loudly, and showed that the refreshment had done it good. Its thirst must have been awful, for when Walter repeated the experiment, it greedily emptied the hat. Walter brought it water till it could drink no more, and then washed its eyes. At the outset the horse quivered whenever the boy approached it, but ere long grew less shy, and allowed him to come up without starting. He next fetched fresh grass from the swamp, and offered it to the chestnut; but, as it would not take any food, Walter laid the fodder down at the foot of the tree.

He had a horse again, but the question was whether he should be able to mount it. Still he determined to try it in any case. But now he must think of himself, for his stomach was beginning to cry cupboard. He was in no embarrassment about food, however, for hundreds of dead animals lay close to him. He went back to the swamp, which was completely filled with carcasses, and found on its edge a young deer, which the flying herds had trampled to death. Walter cut the tenderest of the meat from it, lit a fire near the old mosquito-tree—for there was any quantity of dry wood about—and prepared his dinner. The spring water was splendid, and quenched his thirst. Still, he had to think of the immediate future, for he must in any case remain here several days, ere he would be able to ride the horse. If the sun came out again, it might be expected that the numerous carcasses would soon begin to putrify, in which case he would be unable to use their meat; and on this desolate, burnt plain he could not expect to find any living creatures. Hence he cut the flesh of the deer into very thin strips, and dried them in the smoke of his fire.

The storm had greatly relaxed, but the sky was overcast and threatened rain. Night set in—Walter gave his horse more water, carried it another armful of grass, and then lay down on the burnt ground, near his fire, after making up the latter with several large logs. Although his clothes had dried, and he kept up the fire through the night, he was very cold, for he had nothing to wrap himself up in, and he could not lay the jaguar skin under him, for it was still wet. When day broke, Walter awoke from a sound sleep, which had lasted several hours; and his first glance was at the chestnut. It had already risen, and was eating the grass which Walter had carried to it on the previous evening. When he approached the animal, however, it sprang back in terror, and reared and pulled with all its might at the rope by which it was fastened to the tree. Walter tried to pacify the horse by kind words, but it snorted wildly at him, and looked at him timidly; and when he fetched it a hatful of water, it drew back from him, and behaved very wildly. At this point Walter seized the long lasso, and tightened the noose round the horse's neck. It reared and fought against the violence done it, but it was deprived of breath and fell to the ground, trembling in all its limbs. Walter quickly loosened the noose, to prevent the animal being suffocated, and tried to pacify it by caresses; but the animal had scarce regained breath, ere it leaped up and behaved more wildly than before. Walter, however, once again tightened the noose—the chestnut fell, and this time its tamer let it suffer longer, and some time elapsed before the animal recovered after the noose was opened.


It now seemed to recognize its master, for it allowed him to approach it, and pat its smooth skin as he had done before. Still, its trembling and panting proved that its terror was very great, though it dared not attempt resistance. It refused to drink the water which Walter offered it, but ate the grass which he brought in large quantities.

After Walter had indulged in some roast meat and a draught from the spring, he went into the tall grassy reeds up to a dead young buffalo, whose skin he wanted. An old buffalo and a horse were lying atop of the young animal, and Walter had a terrible job in removing them. After a long struggle, however, he succeeded, and skinned the animal. The hide was large enough to cover him from head to foot, but not so unhandy and heavy as that of a full-grown buffalo. Walter then split the skulls of several of the animals lying about with his axe, took out the brains, and rubbed the hide with them, after which he folded it, and laid stones and logs upon it, with the purpose of preparing it the next day. His horse ate all the grass he brought it on this day, but did not consent till toward evening to drink water out of his hat.

Toward sunset the clouds broke, the blue sky was visible here and there, and the sun showed itself again. It threw its parting beams over the black plain, and Walter gazed at it in surprise, for he had believed that the spot where it was now setting was the one in which it rose. He had therefore been riding westward, while of the firm opinion that he was going eastward to Bear River. There was now three or four days' journey between him and his home, and the road thither ran over a desolate plain, on

which no grass grew for his horse, and where he was very uncertain whether he should find water for himself and his steed. Hence he could not take this route to reach the fort; but what other could he choose? He knew that the Red River ran from west to east, and that he must strike it by going northwards; but he was unaware how far he might be from its banks. The fire had come from the north-east, and advanced north-west, and hence toward the Red River. Walter, therefore, thought it most advisable to continue his journey to the south-west, in the hope of soonest finding there land spared by the flames. In any case he must stop where he was for some days, till he had tamed the mustang sufficiently to mount it. On the following day he put the saddle on its back and the bit in its mouth, and frequently hung on its back with his arms, which the horse patiently and tremorously endured, partly because it was still too feeble, partly too because the noose reminded it of choking. However, it appeared to recognize the kindness of its master, and to feel less afraid of him. Walter also prepared the buffalo hide on this day, in which operation the warm sunshine greatly assisted him.

While Walter was engaged in the preparations for continuing his journey, the utmost grief prevailed in the fort about the terrible fate which had in all probability befallen him. Daniel, on the evening when he sought Walter and found the bear, spent the night by the side of the latter, and on the next morning followed with the greatest difficulty the footsteps of his young friend until they escaped his observation; and he then rode many miles haphazard in the hope of finding some sign of Walter. Suddenly,



however, he saw the black columns of smoke rising from the south, and gradually advancing westward. The thought that Walter might have been begirt by the fire horrified him; and when he in the afternoon accidentally came across Rupert's track going west, desperation urged him onward. He got off his horse in order to follow the track more easily, and at length reached the burnt prairie, where he saw from the horse's hoof-marks that it had been galloping at a furious pace. He could not follow them long, however, as they were trodden out by the flying animals.

All hope of Walter's escape was now obliterated from the faithful negro's mind, for he was only too well aware that he could not have escaped the flames driven before the storm.

With a bleeding heart he looked for a long time over the endless dark expanse before him, and then returned with tear-laden eyes to the oak wood, where he spent the night without eating or drinking. But when he arrived on the following day at the fort without Walter, all the Taylors broke out into loud lamentations—all wept and wrung their hands at the loss of the brave lad, who had sacrificed himself for their welfare and happiness. The negro's report left no doubt but that Walter had met with his death in the flames of the burning grass. The news of Walter's loss also caused a great regret at the settlements on the Choctaw, especially at Warwick's, for the old gentleman had always regarded the lad as the mainstay of the family on Bear Creek.

A week had passed since Walter had escaped from a death by fire, and day by day the wild horse had grown

more friendly and willing. He saddled and bridled it every morning, and the creature already allowed him to mount its back, which he did very frequently, and taught it to answer the rein, although he did not loose it from the tree. The rotting carcasses around him, which polluted the atmosphere, warned him, however, earnestly to leave the spot, and he resolved one morning after breakfast to take an experimental ride on the chestnut. He loosened the rope from the tree, got into the saddle, and guided the horse in a wide circle round the swamp. To his great delight the animal readily obeyed the rein, although it only moved slowly with its rider. It was still very faint, for though Walter supplied it with plenty of grass, it did not recover on it so fast as if it had sought its own nourishment. After Walter had ridden about for an hour, he returned to the spring to let the horse have a good drink, and then rode it into the best grass on the skirt of the swamp, where he left the horse to graze.

He spent nearly the whole day in this way, attending to his horse, which really enjoyed a hearty repast for the first time since its captivity, and then quietly allowed itself to be fastened to the tree.

The next morning Walter saddled the chestnut at an early hour, rolled up the buffalo hide, and fastened it behind the saddle and secured the dried meat to it. After refreshing himself and his steed once more at the spring, he mounted and rode toward the south-west, in the beams of the rising sun. The hope of seeing his friends again soon urged him on, and the thought of curing their grief by his appearance gladdened his young heart. He pressed the mustang,

and frequently made it trot some considerable distance ; but at the end of a few hours he perceived that its strength was not sufficient for a long ride, such as he had often taken on Rupert. Hence, he was obliged to check his longing for his family, and be contented with a walking pace, and he had the consolation of thinking that, had not the horse been so weak, he would not so easily have subjugated it.

The broad plain, through which he took his way, offered a wretched sight ; it seemed to be covered by a black pall, not a green stalk or tree could be seen, here and there a thin rising jet of smoke indicated the dry stem of a decayed mimosa which had caught fire, and would glimmer on till its very roots were burnt in the ground, while in all directions he saw swarms of buzzards soaring over dead animals which had fallen victims to the flames. Walter rode past dead buffaloes, bears, deer, and antelopes, and there was a countless number of wolves, whose carcases lay like black stones on the burnt, parched ground.

In vain did Walter look incessantly ahead in the hope of greeting the pleasant green hue of living vegetation. The gloomy scene remained unaltered. The sun had passed the zenith, and was descending toward the western horizon, and Walter had not allowed his horse a moment's rest, for he was of the firm belief that he must discover some green point in the black distance.

The mustang was quite exhausted, and its rider was obliged to urge it on with the spur, lest it should stop altogether. At last, however, even this resource proved of no avail, and Walter dismounted, to reduce the animal's burden.

He walked on, dragging the horse after him by the bridle, for he could not give up the hope of finding water.

The sun had reached the flat dark rim of the prairie and sank behind it like a glowing ball of fire, while the sky assumed a blood-red hue, and its fiery reflection quivered over the black steppe. The chestnut at length refused to go a step further, and Walter saw clearly that it was not through indisposition but perfect exhaustion. He dragged it by force to a mosquito-tree, fastened it to the stem, and took off its saddle. He would have gladly brought it grass and water in his hat, but where was he to get them from? He was himself tortured by thirst, and yet he would have willingly endured it, could he have helped the worn-out animal. It soon lay down, and Walter, without supping, rested by its side on his jaguar skin and pulled the buffalo hide over him, for he could not have eaten the dried venison without first refreshing his mouth with a draught of water. Night soon spread over the solitude, neither near nor far did a sound reveal the presence of a living creature, and even the breeze seemed to have retired to rest, for not a breath played on Walter's curls as he fell back on his saddle and told his sad story to the stars which sparkled so pleasantly above him.

A pale strip of light in the eastern sky showed itself on the verge of the steppe and announced the approach of day, when Walter awoke from delicious dreams, such as only youth brings, and looked round him in surprise, for at the first moment he could not remember where he really was. The dark outline of his horse, which he could recognize by his side in the gloom, soon reminded him of his situation,

and he looked compassionately and anxiously at the weakened animal, and did not stir from his bed, lest he should disturb the poor companion of his sufferings in its rest. He, however, raised his eyes to the stars twinkling above him, and implored the Almighty still to afford him His merciful support.

Walter's confidence in God's protection and help had been firmly rooted from his earliest youth, and the evidently marvellous aid granted him in the many great dangers to which he had been exposed, in spite of his youth, had not been unnoticed by him, and had only rendered his grateful heart the more staunch. He now looked forward to the future without any despondency, and said to himself that the Hand which had hitherto supported and defended him would not be withdrawn.

Morning was flickering over the earth, and day soon cast its bright cheering light across the desolate plain. Walter was sorry to be obliged to disturb the chestnut's rest, but he wished to take his longest ride in the cool of the morning and rest in the mid-day heat. The stallion leaped up, and looked around it quite fresh ; it even offered some slight resistance when its master proceeded to saddle and bridle it. This sign of strength was most welcome to Walter, and he only employed kindness while preparing the animal for a further journey. He then leapt on its back, and was greatly amused at the chestnut breaking into a gallop and trying to bolt with him. Ere long, however, its efforts began to grow alarming, and Walter seized the reins with both hands, to keep his power over it. The horse, however, could hardly be checked ; it constantly

raised its nostrils to the fresh breeze, and tried to turn to the right from the course in which its rider wanted to keep it. This remarkable change in the horse's behaviour, as well as its obstinate efforts to go to the north, attracted Walter's attention, and he granted it greater liberty. The mustang scarce felt the rein loosened ere it galloped away with its rider as if it had never been tired, so that Walter had some difficulty in retaining his mastery.

The stallion's speed continually grew greater and more hurried, and the rider could do nothing more than stick to his saddle. In a few minutes they had gone some miles, when Walter noticed ahead of him a bright green patch, and distinctly recognized two poplars—the surest sign that water was near at hand. It was now clear to him why the animal had insisted on following this direction, for the wind blew straight from the poplars, and the horse had scented the water miles away.


In a very short time they reached the poplars, which grew on the bank of a clear stream running to the north-east. Before the horse reached the bank, however, Walter stopped it by main force, leaped from the saddle, took the latter off the chestnut's back, and then led it by the bridle to the water, as he presumed it intended to lie down in the stream. This it did at once, and rolled over and over; then it sprang up, quenched its thirst, and turned its attention to the juicy grass on the bank. Walter fastened it to one of the poplars, so that it could reach both banks to graze on, and after quenching his own excessive thirst, he lay down on the grass, and ate several pieces of the dried meat.

Refreshed and strengthened, he rested his back against one of the trees, and for some hours watched his horse eating the fresh green stalks among the tall reedy grass which had been injured by the fire. At length the animal was satiated, and repose seemed what it needed most, for it lay down on the grass and stretched its limbs. Walter, too, felt sleepy, and his eyes closed. After a while, however, he opened them again and gazed out at the wide desolate plain, as if to convince himself that he could sleep without any apprehension.

At this moment his eye fell on a bright spot in the distance which he had not remarked before. He took out his telescope and recognized some twenty antelopes, which were wandering over the black plain and probably seeking water, as his chestnut had done. They were, however, going further up the stream, where no bush or tall grass rendered it possible to approach them ; and as Walter was aware of the great curiosity of the creatures, he quickly cut a long stick from the poplar, pointed it at the end, fastened his pocket handkerchief to the other end, and planted this flag on the bank some fifty yards up the stream. He then lay down behind the poplars and watched the antelopes through his telescope. They drew closer carelessly and inattentively, but all at once stopped and raised their heads. They looked with surprise at the flag fluttering in the breeze, and presently an old buck started and walked in front of the herd toward the flag, the others following in a close body. Walter kept the glass fixed on them, till they broke into a trot, then he seized his rifle, raised himself on one knee behind the tree, and got ready to fire. The antelopes now

galloped up to the flag, and when they came within fifty paces of it they went round it in a circle, and came straight at the poplars. At this moment the mustang raised its head, and the antelopes started on one side in alarm. Walter, however, by this time had covered a young buck and fired. The animal fell, and strove in vain to rise again and follow its companions; for the bullet had pierced its heart. Walter reached the buck in a few bounds, and gave it the death stab. He rapidly cut the best meat off it in order to have a stock for some days, and then lit a fire under the poplars, over which he prepared a dinner of the fattest bits. He enjoyed it famously, refreshed himself once more with a drink of water, and lay down on the grass to render himself quite fresh to continue his journey.

The sun was beginning to decline, when he awoke refreshed, and encouraged his horse to rise. The latter seemed to have taken a fresh lease of life, and Walter had considerable difficulty in saddling it. At last, however, he was again seated on its back, and put it into a sharp trot, while following the stream as it ran from the south-west. He intended to go in this direction till he reached the end of the prairie-fire, and then turn his course eastward, where he felt sure of coming upon settlements. On this stream his horse was secured against hunger and thirst, and he might fairly expect to meet with game near it. He rode till late into the night, again slept on the bank of the stream, and followed it the whole of the next day. At sunset he reached the source of the stream, on the top of a hillock, where a few leafless oaks stood, and established his bivouac here. The next morning Walter succeeded in



shooting a fat deer, and thus made up his supply of fresh meat again.

The water ended here; and the boy would again have mounted his steed with doubts as to the future, had he not noticed in the distance the blue outline of a forest rising above the edge of the prairie. With fresh hopes of finding in this forest the end of the desolation caused by the fire, he left the spring-head, and gave his horse the spur, so that it might carry him as speedily as possible out of this desert. The chestnut had quite recovered, and was beginning to give its rider some trouble through its impetuosity, but he knew an excellent means of taming it. He allowed it to gallop as long as it liked, and when it began to relax its speed, he forced it into a gallop with his spurs, till the white foam appeared on its glistening flanks.

After a few hours' quick riding, Walter approached the forest. His hopes of reaching here the end of the fire grew with every step the chestnut advanced, and they attained certainty when he entered its shadow about mid-day. The fire had advanced as far as its edge, and had passed by it. The forest was rather clear, and only displayed at intervals a thicket of evergreen laurels and myrtles, but under all the isolated trees was fresh green grass, on which the fire had found no sustenance.

Walter rode through the forest in the hope of finding water, of which he felt the more certain, because enormous rocks rose out of the earth all around. After half an hour's riding, he reached the western side of the wood, where it formed a hilly prairie, covered with fresh green grass as far as

the eye could see. This land must have been burnt by the Indians a few months before ; and, indeed, nearly all the prairie fires are caused by the Redskins. When an Indian tribe has remained any length of time at one spot, and game is beginning to grow scarce, they move on, and take advantage of the moment when the wind is blowing in their faces to fire the grass behind them, so that when they return, a few months later, they may find fresh grass and abundance of game there.

At the skirt of the forest Walter found a glorious clear stream, which came down from a rocky height on his left hand. He resolved to rest here, and then follow the border line of the fire south-east to its beginning. The rocks rose in the forest a short distance from Walter, and he turned his horse towards them, while riding up the prattling stream.

The nearer he came to the rocks the more frequent became the boulders between the trees, so that he was at last compelled to turn the horse into the stream, in order to reach the well-head.

Without any great difficulty he arrived at the foot of the rocks, where the water bubbled up merrily from a deep crevice in the gray stone, and ran through a small patch of grass, which it rendered most verdant. This was a glorious pasturage for the chestnut, as well as a cosy hiding-place for himself, and hence Walter looked about for a suitable spot where he could bivouac. He had only gone a short distance up the steep rocks, between aged evergreen oaks and scattered boulders, when he noticed behind a thick laurel bush a deep crevice in the rock, which seemed to

form a spacious cave. When he led his chestnut to the entrance, he found that it ran for some distance into the mountain, and was large enough to shelter him and his horse. He could not have discovered a more suitable resting-place ; still he resolved to examine the interior of the cave carefully, for fear lest there might be any wild beast there, as this was the sleeping-time of the bears. He led the mustang away from the entrance, fastened it to a tree, and then stepped into the cave, rifle in hand.

He had scarce entered it, however, ere a deafening rattle was raised in it, and Walter darted back to the entrance, for he recognized the warning signal of the crotalus, which it gives with the rattle at the end of its tail to everyone that approaches it, and he believed that there must be at least a hundred of the reptiles in the cave, to produce such a stupendous noise. He had, however, killed an immense number of these snakes in the vicinity of the fort, and knew that they cannot injure any one who is aware of their presence, as they only bite in self-defence, and timidly fly from human beings. Walter, therefore, armed himself with a stout stick, and went back into the cave. The snakes had all fled to its furthest end, and had crawled under loose stones ; but the light was sufficiently strong for Walter to perceive them. When he approached, they raised their heads and rattled tremendously ; but every blow dealt by the boy at a head killed a snake. There were several dozens of them, large and small. Walter threw them out of the cave with the stick, and examined carefully whether one of these repulsive reptiles was anywhere concealed, but he had killed them all. He

then relieved his horse of its saddle and bridle, carried everything into the cave, and picketed his horse in the grass. He had brought with him several splendid lumps of deer meat, which he prepared for supper inside the cave, where he lit a fire. The smoke issued through the crevice like a chimney, and disappeared in the thickly-leaved crowns of the live oaks which spread out their enormous branches over the rocks, so that the rising smoke could not betray Walter's presence to the savages, should any be encamped in the neighbourhood. From the entrance of the cave he could not only observe his horse, but survey the forest for a long distance, as if from a fortress, and he peered out into the darkness most attentively. With the exception of a few herds of deer that darted past, he noticed neither animals nor Indians, however, and he was surprised at not finding a larger amount of game here, as the grass was rich and young, both in the forest and on the adjacent prairie, while eastward the land had been burnt bare for such an enormous distance.

CHAPTER XV.

SHOOTING A DEER.—A GREAT SURPRISE.—THE DELAWARE CHIEF.—THE INDIAN CAMP.—A CRACK SHOT.—ROUND THE FIRE.—THE BLACK PANTHER.—RETURN TO THE FORT.—DANIEL'S FLIGHT.—A HAPPY MEETING.

WHEN the sun set and the mustang refused to eat any more, but lay down to rest in the grass, Walter led it into the cave, and fastened it there to a stout wooden peg, which he had cut with his axe, and driven into a narrow crack in the rock. Then he planted several thickly-leaved bushes in front of the cave, so that its entrance might be hidden from any unwelcome eye, and took his weapons to try whether he could not kill a head of game. He attentively surveyed the forest, and then walked carefully between the rocks, while looking around him anxiously. He had never seen the game so shy even in the neighbourhood of the fort, where he and Daniel, however, hunted so frequently, and accounted for their wildness here through the prairie fire, which must have put the animals to flight. The few antelopes and deer which he saw were remarkably shy, and fled whenever he attempted to get within shot. It was getting dark when Walter went up the stream again to his cave, without having succeeded in killing anything, and when he climbed

up the rocks in the last gleam of daylight, he fancied he heard a shot in the distance. He stopped and listened for a long time, but all was silent, and he tried to persuade himself that he was mistaken, for he knew that the shot could only have been fired by an Indian, and the presence of savages, who were hunting in these regions, might be the cause of the shyness of the game.

He grew calm again, however, when he passed through the bushes into the cave, for he was too well concealed here for the Indians to find him, and, besides, he did not intend to stay any length of time. If he could kill a deer, and dry its flesh, he hoped to be able to complete his journey to the fort with that supply, in case he came across no more game *en route*. For this purpose he intended to try his luck again the next morning.

Walter found his horse lying full length on the ground, and enjoying its ease, and the creature raised its head affectionately to welcome its master. Walter patted its neck kindly, laid aside his weapons and lit a fire to prepare his supper. So soon as this was effected, however, he extinguished his fire, lest its bright reflection through the top of the crevice might betray his presence. He would have been glad to keep it up all night, for it was very cool, and the wind blew into the cave; but caution forbade it; hence he wrapped himself tightly in his buffalo hide, and commended himself to heaven, while fatigue closed his eyes.

Day was breaking as Walter awoke from a refreshing sleep, and leapt up to take advantage of the prevailing gloom for his intended chase. With the buffalo hide over

his shoulders, and his rifle in his hand, he stepped out of the cave on to a projecting rock, and surveyed his immediate neighbourhood ; then he refreshed himself at the bubbling spring, carried the buffalo hide back to his hiding-place, and commenced his ramble through the wood, moving from stone to stone, and listening to the slightest sound which the morning breeze produced among the dew-laden leaves, and the tall grass. For nearly half an hour he had crept about the forest and not seen a head of game, when the sun threw its first beams through the evergreen trees, and in the golden light which fell on a fresh, pure grass plot under some lofty live oaks, Walter perceived the glistening red coat of a browsing deer. He stepped rapidly from oak to oak, and had drawn within one hundred yards of the animal, when it suddenly started and bounded off. Walter, however, followed it with his rifle, and it had taken but a few leaps when the boy's shot echoed through the forest, and the deer fell all of a heap, mortally wounded. Walter ran up to it delightedly, threw himself on it for fear it should escape, and dealt it the death blow with his bowie-knife. He had laid the rifle by his side in the grass, and was kneeling over the deer to paunch it, when a voice said close to him—

“Ay, ay, so young and already so good a hunter ?” Walter started in alarm, but seized his rifle and turned round to the speaker. At this moment a tall handsome man emerged from behind an oak close to him, and made him friendly signs as he said—

“You do not require to seize your rifle, my pretty lad, for if I had wished to do you an injury I would not have



" Ei, Ei, so young, and already so good a hunter?"—Page 252.

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addressed you. You were in my power, and I know how to use a rifle ; but your shot at the deer was a masterly one, and there are not many hunters in these parts who could imitate you. Where is your hunting party encamped ? I am a Delaware and a friend of the white men ; conduct me to them, so that I may speak and hold a palaver with them."

Walter had observed at the first glance that the stranger was an Indian, although his appearance differed greatly from that of the savages he had hitherto seen. He wore a hunting shirt made of leather, stitched with various colours, and neatly fringed, which came down to his knees ; deer-hide gaiters and mocassins completed his dress, and a gay-coloured silk handkerchief was wound round his head in the form of a turban. Below it his glistening black hair hung down on his broad shoulders, and round his reddish-brown neck was a string of beads, from which was suspended a large silver medal, with the bust of the President of the United States. He was a tall handsomely-built man, graceful, though muscular, and his features were noble and expressive. His aquiline nose and lofty forehead evidenced strength of will, determination, and courage, and in his large dark eyes earnestness, but at the same time deep passion, could be read. The same calmness was spread over the whole of his haughty person ; and each of his movements seemed to be governed by it. When he spoke to Walter, however, his face assumed a gentle kindly expression, which imbued the lad with confidence, and dispelled the fear which had possessed him at the first moment.

"If you are a Delaware, I have no reason to fear you ;

for the Delawares have always been friends of the white men, and fought faithfully on the side of the English during the War of Independence. Daniel has told me much that is good about the Delawares," Walter replied, as he offered his hand without hesitation to the Indian, who shook it heartily.

"Who is this Daniel who has told you so much about the Delawares?" the Indian asked.

"He is a negro, staying as a friend with my uncle," Walter answered.

"And where is your uncle?—lead me to him," the Redskin continued.

"He is not here; he lives on Bear River. I am alone here."

"Alone! you?" the Indian asked with an accent that seemed to doubt the truth of Walter's statement.

"Yes, quite alone. The prairie fire drove me here, and it is by a miracle that I did not perish in it. I have lost my poor horse, but tamed a mustang instead, which carried me hither," Walter replied with his natural open-heartedness.

"You astonish me. You are only a boy, and yet your conduct, as well as your actions, is that of a powerful man. What is your name? Mine is Leopard."

"My name is Walter Arden, and my uncle's on Bear River is Henry Taylor," Walter answered.

"Come with me to my camp, then, Walter, for I am on the road to Bear River, and will take you back to your uncle. I have many friends on the Choctaw, whom I visit every spring. Where is your horse?" the Indian con-

tinued, and laid his hand caressingly on the boy's shoulder.

"Over there, on those rocks," Walter said, pointing upwards.

"In the cave up there! I have killed many a plump bear in it, for it is their favourite abode. Load your rifle, while I skin the deer," the Indian said, and knelt down by the animal, while Walter thrust a bullet down.

"You would not have found much game in this forest," Leopard continued during the operation. "We have shot two hundred deer and antelopes here, for we found a large quantity of game when we arrived a month ago; and the prairie fire also drove a number toward us. It is fortunate that I met you, for we intended to start to-morrow morning. It is only a pity that you were not here sooner; for a hunter like you would have been very welcome to me."

In a few minutes the Indian had skinned the deer, broken it up, and taken the two legs to carry, while he bound the shoulders and loins together, and gave them to Walter. After this he took up his long single-barrelled rifle, and walked with his young companion to the rocks, which they soon reached. Leopard knew the road to the cave very well, and walked into it first. The chestnut started back in terror from the Indian, but Walter pacified it; and while the former was examining the horse from all sides, and commending it, Walter saddled and bridled it, and put the game he had brought with him on its back. After throwing the buffalo hide over the saddle, he led his horse out of the cave after the Indian, who followed a path

unknown to Walter, through the rocks, by which they speedily reached the green prairie. Leopard was silent and apparently reflecting, and Walter was mentally back at the fort, saw himself embraced by his family, and heard their cries of joy and their words of affection. They thus walked silently to the skirt of the forest, and reached the Delaware camp half an hour after.

Walter recognized it some distance off by the columns of smoke that ascended between the trees, and soon after by the numerous horses grazing, some in the shadow of the trees, others on the prairie.

The camp itself consisted of some twenty tents, made of calico, and kept up by wooden poles. In front of each tent a fire burnt, at which Indian squaws could be seen busily engaged in preparing food, while the powerful young men were reclining on buffalo hides, or cleaning their weapons. Wherever Walter looked he saw hides stretched out to dry on the trees, frequently some dozens fluttering in the breeze, up to the highest branches.

When Leopard entered the camp with his guest, the men rose and came to meet him and salute him ; for he was the chief of this tribe, and at the same time head-chief of all the Delawares, who were divided into twelve tribes. The whole nation counted scarce a thousand souls, although in former years it had been the most powerful among the Indians of this hemisphere, and held as its property the eastern lands from the Gulf of Chesapeake to the great Northern lakes. Driven from their homes by the white men, the Delawares notwithstanding remained on friendly terms with them, and wandered, while waging sanguinary contests

against the other Indians, further and further west, till they established a permanent home on Kansas River to the westward of Missouri, which territory was given them as an inalienable property by the United States Government. Then they assumed a species of civilization—that is to say, they gave up their nomadic life, built villages, bred cattle, and grew maize. At these small settlements only the old folk, most of the squaws, and the children resided, while the young men with a few squaws lived by hunting nearly the whole year round, following the game in spring northward to the Rocky Mountains, and in autumn south to the shores of the Mexican Gulf. They stopped for a few weeks at their settlement in the middle of their journey, and then took leave of their family for the remainder of the year. The Delawares, however, were in the service of the United States Government, and were employed in negotiating with the other Indian nations, for which they were paid a considerable amount annually. This friendly relation with Government was partly a reason why the Delawares was held in high respect by the other Redskins; but the main reason could be found in their personal character. Frankness, honesty, and a deep feeling of friendship, but at the same time an indomitable thirst for vengeance, daring, and desperate bravery, were their pre-eminent qualities. Even the most powerful Indian nations did not dare give occasion for hostilities with the Delawares, and recognized their great superiority as warriors. The Delawares were all excellent shots, possessed the best fire-arms, and were as active on foot as on horseback. They had, more especially, a great advantage over the Southern Indians, who had not

yet entered into friendly relations with the pale-faces, and were still in a primitive state ; for these had no fire-arms, as the white men refused to repair them for them or to supply them with ammunition.

Leopard was now with his tribe returning northward, after hunting for several months on these southern grounds, and intended to spend a few weeks with his family on the Kansas, ere he started to hunt again. The chief entrusted Walter's horse to an Indian squaw, who would attend to it, and led him to his tent, where he bade him welcome, and assured him of his protection and hospitality. Like all the Delawares, he spoke English very well, but now summoned his warriors in their mother tongue, and informed them how he had become acquainted with the strange lad, and how he intended to lead him back to his family on Bear River. The statement about Walter's qualities as a hunter at once gained him the respect of the Indians, and they examined his weapons with great admiration. They had seated themselves round him, and were passing his rifle from hand to hand, as each wished to inspect it, when suddenly a large bird of prey appeared over their heads and began circling in the air. Leopard looked at Walter smilingly and inquiringly, and pointed to the bird above, as if he wished his young guest to prove the truth of his statement about his skill as a marksman. Walter looked up at the bird, hurriedly seized his rifle, aimed for a second at the hawk hovering over him, and fired. The bird let its wings sink at the same instant, and fell into the grass, to the delight of the Indians, which they expressed by shouts. The chief gave a proud glance

at the company, and then offered his hand to Walter as if in thanks, while saying—

“Why were you born among the white men and not among the Delawares? You would have become a great man under my guidance. If you had no friends on Bear River, the Delawares would become your best friends.”

The Indians followed their chief's example, offered Walter their hand, and each of them told the boy that he was his friend. Walter was overjoyed at the kind treatment he received, and pleased at finding Daniel's statements about the Delawares so fully confirmed. He was now treated with the greatest attention, and bear's paws baked in the ashes, roasted buffalo marrow-bones and boiled deer-liver were placed before him, with splendidly clear honey as dessert. After the meal the Indians lay down around him in the shadow of the trees, and he was obliged to tell them about England; for he had informed the chief that he was not an American by birth.

He had to answer countless questions, and everything the boy said was listened to with the greatest attention. In the evening after supper, however, when they were lying at the fire before the chief's tent, Walter requested the latter to tell him some portion of the history of his people, because he considered it most interesting. The chief appeared to be flattered by the request, for he sat up and began in an earnest solemn voice to describe the grandeur of his nation, at the period when it called the shores of Chesapeake Bay, of the Susquehanna, and of the great northern lakes its home, and its kingdom extended to the coasts of the ocean. With great enthusiasm he praised

the inexhaustible wealth of the unbounded hunting-grounds and the territory of the Delawares, described the beauty of the noble steeds and splendid weapons of which his forefathers had possession, and mentioned with animation the names of the most celebrated warriors, whose exploits had been for centuries handed down from mouth to mouth in the memory of the people. He told of the might of the Delawares, their love of truth, their hospitality, their bravery, and the many glorious victories they had gained over their foes. He spoke for several hours without being once interrupted by his hearers, and Walter, like all the rest, was deeply affected by this solemn narration of the departed glory of the Delawares. The chief at length ceased speaking with an expression of sorrow, and sat for a while silently looking down; but then he seized Walter's hand and said, with a glance at the star-begemmed sky above him—

“It is the will of the great Spirit that the red children shall make room for the white men on this earth.”

Then again he sank into deep thought, which the other Indians, it seemed, regarded as a signal to retire, for they all rose and went to their several tents. When the chief was seated alone at the fire with Walter, he turned to him, and said—

“Yesterday morning you mentioned a negro as your uncle's friend. I hope that he does not let himself be deceived by the black. A negro is never a friend, he always speaks with a double tongue, and his heart is as black as his skin.”

“In that case our friend Daniel is an exception from the rule, for he is a true, sincere, and disinterested friend,”

Walter quickly interrupted, for he would not allow such an unjust suspicion to rest for a moment on his Daniel.

"He will make you believe so, until he can derive some profit from cheating you," the chief continued.

"No, no, Daniel has been and ever will be our faithful friend, and will never desert us," Walter again objected, for he would not hear a word against Daniel.

"He will stop with you until he believes he has found a pleasanter home elsewhere. A negro once lived with me. He was called the Black Panther, and was my best hunter as well as my best warrior. The Indians feared the Black Panther from the Gulf of Mexico up to the Rocky Mountains! He was born among us, for his father and mother were slaves of my father. I first put the boy on a horse. I put the first weapons in his hands, and taught him how to use them. I, too, it was who taught him the war-yell of the Delawares, which afterwards none of us could utter with such power as the Black Panther. He slept, ate, hunted, and fought by my side, and wherever the Leopard and the Black Panther appeared, their victory was certain. His parents died; their bones repose with those of my fathers, but the Black Panther turned unfaithful to the Leopard and left him, without bidding him farewell. He flew toward the settlements of the white men, and I followed him, in order to cripple his feet and leave him a prey to the wild beasts. But the feet of the Black Panther were quicker and lighter than those of the Leopard, and he escaped among the pale-faces. I have never heard of him again; a negro has no heart for his friend, he has only a heart for himself."

These words took Walter's breath away, for he remembered the warning which Daniel had shouted to the flying Waco before he shot him down, "You must have heard of the Black Panther!"

Daniel was the Black Panther—of this Walter could entertain no doubt, and with terror he thought that the chief would see the negro at the fort, and do him an injury. He deeply regretted that he had said anything about Daniel, as Leopard would be sure to ask after him when they reached the fort; and Walter reflected on the ways and means to prevent a meeting between the Indian and the negro. The chief went on conversing with the boy for some time longer, but when he noticed his chariness of words, he supposed that he was tired, and wished to go to sleep.

He, therefore, begged him to enter the tent, and showed him a bed there, which the squaws had prepared of soft hides; after which he wished him pleasant repose, which would rest him for the morrow's journey.

Four days later, the Taylors were sitting, towards evening, in the beams of the departing sun, upon a bench outside the fort, and Daniel was lying on the grass by their side. They were resting from their day's toil, and, with sorrowful thoughts of their dear lost Walter, were gazing out at the prairie, on which they believed that the faithful, brave lad had sacrificed himself for them. They had been sitting there for some time, speaking but rarely—for whenever Walter's name was mentioned the conversation soon ceased, and Mrs. Taylor had repeatedly wiped away secretly the tears which filled her eyes, when Daniel rose on his left

elbow, and held his hand over his eyes, while reconnoitring the flat distance.

"Are those buffaloes coming up? Do you not see the black line over that mosquito tree? It is moving; it is probably a herd of buffaloes. If they come close, I will shoot one, as fresh meat will do no harm," the negro said, as he still looked out over the plain.

"When Walter was still with us we had always an abundance of fresh meat in the house; but since his death, we all seem to have lost our activity," said Mrs. Taylor, and tears of sorrow again fell from her eyes.

"Yes, yes, we have lost our energy, heaven knows. I do not care to touch a rifle, for I always see our dear Walter again before me, and feel as if my heart would break," Daniel remarked, with a heavy, painful sigh; but then suddenly leapt up, and exclaimed, "Those are no buffaloes, but a band of Indians, and they are coming here."

With these words he ran into the fort, and returned a few minutes after with a telescope in his hand. He gazed through it at the black line, whose movements were growing more visible on the horizon.

"They are Indians," he said, after a pause, and with a tone which unmistakeably proved that the negro felt alarmed.

"There must be a great number of them, for the train is a long one," Taylor remarked, noticing Daniel's excitement, as he kept the glass fixed to his eye, without replying a word.

"Had we not better go into the fort, and fetch

our guns?" Taylor presently asked, growing more and more anxious.

"You and yours have nothing to fear from these Indians; they are Delawares, and friendly to the white folk," Daniel continued, in a trembling voice, and still held the glass to his eye. Suddenly, however, he threw up his arms, with a loud cry, and shrieked, "Walter! Walter!—our Walter!—he is alive!—he is coming! Great heaven, it is Walter!" And the Taylors took up the cry, and held out their arms longingly towards the place where the band of riders became more distinct every moment. Daniel, however, had stepped into the fort, and returned a few minutes after with his weapons in his hand, and in an evident state of excitement.

"I must be gone," he said, with great emotion; "the Delawares must not see me here. If they ask after me, tell them that I have left you, and gone to sea again."

"Daniel! for heaven's sake, Daniel! do you wish to leave us? That is impossible—you must not go. Dear Daniel, stay with us. What will become of us without you?" the Taylors exclaimed, and wound their arms round the negro; but he liberated himself, and said, "I must go, for your sake and my own. If Walter has not said too much about me, the Delawares will not remain long, and then I will return to you, for I intend to stay in the forest. Tell the chief, if he asks after me, that I have gone to sea again."


With these words, Daniel sprang away, hurried to the canoe, and soon disappeared in the forest, on the other side of the river.

The Taylors stood speechless. Joy and sorrow affected them equally, and tears of delight and grief filled their eyes simultaneously. Joy, however, was for the moment the stronger: they saw the band of horsemen approaching, and the lost darling of their hearts hurrying back to their arms. Nearer and nearer came the riders, while the hearts of the Taylors beat more loudly and violently, and they stretched out their arms more longingly and eagerly towards Walter. At this moment Walter galloped on his mustang through the undulating grass ahead of the party, and darted up the hill amid the glad shouts of his friends. He threw himself from his horse, and into the arms of the Taylors. It was a moment of the highest felicity, which powerfully affected the reunited family. They had no words, but only tears—burning tears of joy—by which to express their feelings, and give relief to their overladen hearts.

“Where is Daniel?” Walter suddenly exclaimed, as if waking from unconsciousness, and he looked round in terror at the Indians, who had now reached the foot of the hill, and were dismounting.

“He is off into the forest. We are to say that he has gone to sea again,” Taylor replied, hurriedly.

“Thank heaven, everything will go well,” Walter said, and turned quickly to the chief, who was now ascending the hill with solemn earnestness. Walter seized his hand, and led him to his family, to whom he presented him as his kindest and most obliging friend. The Taylors gave the Indian such a hearty welcome, that he was deeply affected, and received with evident delight the thanks and caresses of the overjoyed family. They hardly left him time to shout to his warriors



that they were to pitch their camp higher up the stream, but pulled him into the fort, where they again and again expressed their gratitude to him.

Such noisy expressions of human feelings were as strange as they were surprising to the chief, for the Indian never displays externally what is taking place within him ; in the greatest sorrow, as in the greatest joy, the same haughty calm pervades his features. These manifestations of joy and gratitude on the part of the Taylors, however, robbed him of his external impassiveness, his features relaxed, joy, hearty joy glistened in his eyes, and ever again and again he pressed the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and took the children in his arms. It was long ere the feeling of unhopèd-for joy cooled down among the reunited family ; but then Walter was obliged to give them a full account of his adventures and his rescue. All listened to his story with the greatest sympathy ; they raised many a thankful glance to heaven, and many a tear fell from their eyes. When the lad had finished his statement, there was a fresh outburst of joy and gratitude, and the chief repeated his remark, " Why were you born among the pale-faces, and not among the Delawares ! "

Up to this moment the negro had not been alluded to, and the Taylors purposely avoided every remark that might turn the conversation upon him. Mrs. Taylor and Amy went away to treat their guest to the best of their ability, and Taylor and Walter amused him by showing him their armoury, and explaining to him the advantage their fire-arms possessed over the single-barrelled rifle generally used in this country. The supper might almost

be called elegant for the desert. Mrs. Taylor had employed all the resources of her culinary art, and drawn on the best of her stores. The china service and all the plate were put on the table, which was also decorated with flowers. It did not escape the chief's notice that all this was done in honour of him, for though he had been often entertained by backwoodsmen, the meal was much plainer than this. The attention and hearty welcome of the Taylors pleased him, and he expressed his opinion that the Europeans possessed a higher feeling of friendship and gratitude than the Americans.

After supper, when he was sitting over the fire with the family, and smoking a cigar with Taylor, he remembered the negro, and asked, half in surprise, why he had not shown himself yet, as he was such a good friend of the family. Taylor replied, with some embarrassment, that the black had left him shortly before, and gone to sea again, as he could earn more money there.

The chief looked triumphantly at Walter, and said, "Do you now believe in the friendship of a negro, young man? Your beloved Daniel has proved such a friend as my Black Panther; he, too, has a heart as black as his skin."

Walter made the Indian no reply, which the latter considered an acknowledgment of the truth of his opinion, and turned the conversation to something else.

The evening was spent in pleasant chat, and ere the chief retired to his bed, which had been prepared in Daniel's room, he went to his people, and told them that he meant to sleep with his white friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEPARTURE OF THE LEOPARD.—DANIEL IN THE FOREST.—MULBERRY PICKING.—THE ALARM.—THE INDIAN ATTACK.—THE FIGHT.—THE ESCAPE.—DANIEL'S SELF-DEVOTION.—ARRIVAL OF THE SETTLERS.—SAD TIMES IN THE FORT.

MRS. TAYLOR had the breakfast ready at a very early hour next morning, because her guest wished to continue his journey before sunrise. When the meal was ended, the chief's horse was brought in front of the fort; he took a hearty farewell of his friends, promised to pay them a visit next autumn, and remarked that Walter must then accompany him for several weeks, and hunt with him. The boy accompanied him to his camp, and put the Indians on the road which led through the forest to the Choctaw, so that his friends might ride along with less difficulty. Once again he promised the chief to hunt with him in autumn, and saw the Indians depart with a lightened heart, for he could hardly await the moment when he should see Daniel again.

The negro had watched the movements of the Delawares from a thicket, and when he saw them take the path to the Choctaw, he ran at full speed to the other side of the wood, the skirt of which he reached just as the Indians entered the prairie on the other side. He climbed up one of the tallest trees to watch their movements for a long distance,

and when they at length disappeared in the blue mist, he slipped down the tree, and ran to the fort to see his beloved young master again. He had scarce reached the spot on the river bank where he had hidden the canoe under the dense foliage, ere Walter came bounding down from the fort, and greeted him with shouts of joy. The happiness of the two knew no bounds, and "my good Daniel," "my dear young gentleman," was all that they could stammer.

The negro returned to the fort with Walter, and then informed the family that he was the Black Panther, and had fled from the chief some years previously. He allowed that the latter had treated him well and kindly, but denied that there was anything wrong in his escape, because both his parents had been free negroes, and made slaves by the Delawares by force. They had settled on the Indian border, and had been surprised there, and carried off by Leopard's father. Hence, said Daniel, the Indians could not claim him as their property, even if there existed any right to hold a fellow-man as property, and he felt himself perfectly at liberty to escape from his unjust captivity.

Taylor then asked the negro what the chief would do to him if he got him into his power again, to which Daniel replied that he would kill him in some horrible fashion, for an Indian's vengeance only ended with the death of his enemy.

"But if the chief were offered your value in money, would he not sell you?" the farmer asked.

"An Indian does not care for money, as he possesses

everything his heart desires ; besides, he will make any sacrifice to have his revenge," the negro answered, and declined Taylor's offer to place all his ready money at his disposal as useless. At the same time, however, he tried to calm his friends' fears by explaining to them that no great danger menaced him, as the Delawares only visited these parts in spring and autumn, and he could easily hide from them. He added that he was not so well known to other Indians, and hence the Delawares could not learn that he was the Black Panther, and living here.

The day was given up to the happiness which returned to the settlement with Walter, and in the evening Daniel left the fort to spend the night in the woods, where he had resolved to lodge until the Delawares had left the neighbourhood. He took some skins and cooking utensils with him, in order to establish some sort of house in the forest. Walter accompanied him, in order to lend him a hand and be acquainted with his hiding-place.

The boy returned to the fort at a late hour, and the fears about the negro were lessened when he brought the news how carefully Daniel had concealed himself, and nobody would be able to find him. The next morning he visited his friend, took him bread and other provisions, and the day after rode off at an early hour to the Choctaw to obtain information about the Delawares.

At Warwick's, in whose neighbourhood the Indians had camped, Walter was greeted with great joy. They had already heard of his escape from the Redskins, and thanked him for coming so soon to show himself to them. The Delawares had broken up their camp early that morning, and

ridden off to the Red River, *en route* for their settlement on the Kansas.

In spite of this agreeable news which Walter brought his friend back, the latter remained for several weeks in the forest, as he said that Indians could never be trusted; but then he returned to the fort, and the apprehensions about Daniel's safety were soon forgotten.

Spring had spread its glorious decorations over forest and prairie, and the brilliant flowers bloomed in the fresh verdure of the trees and bushes, and in the juicy tender grass. Amid the dark green foliage of the magnolias, which grew between the colossal forest trees, the alabaster blossoms shone like immense roses; the tulip trees were oversown with golden flowers; the dogwood tree raised its large white asters to the blue sky; the bignonia displayed its blood-red cups, the yucca reared its long stalk, covered with snowy bells, thirty feet above its prickly crown, and the blooming lianas wound in all the colours of the rainbow from branch to branch, and waved like gay garlands in the pleasant fragrant breeze which blew over the flower beds of the illimitable prairie. The mocking bird, the cardinal, and the blue bird, sang their sweet melodies in the shadowy obscurity of the forest; the humming bird darted from flower to flower, and the brilliantly gay plumage of the parrots flashed and sparkled through the luxurious masses of foliage. Everything received fresh active life, and the settlers also displayed renewed energy, for their work prospered under their hands, and promised them a future free from care. The ploughed field displayed a famous crop. The garden

offered abundance, and the cattle rapidly augmented. They had grown accustomed to the dangers that threatened them from the Redskins. They had lost all their terrors for them, and they would have quite forgotten their existence had not their cautious friend Daniel constantly reminded them and warned them at every opportunity to be on their guard. He took care that the horses were brought into the fort every evening, that its gate was properly locked and secured, that the dogs were shut out, and that their fire-arms were ready for use at any moment. He also made the three boys frequently fire at a mark, and always had a present for the best shot, consisting of a powder measure, a bullet-pouch, a fishing-rod, or some other specimen of his own handiwork. The tranquillity at the fort was, however, undisturbed, and the settlers would not have exchanged their quiet happy life for all the delights of the great world.

The forest now offered its first fruits in sweet over-ripe mulberries, and Daniel regularly went across the river every morning with the children to gather a basketful of the delicious fruit. Mrs. Taylor placed it on the table for supper, added fresh cool milk, and all enjoyed the repast extremely.

It had grown late one evening ere Daniel returned from the wood with his young friends, because they had been collecting a larger quantity of mulberries, as Mrs. Taylor had promised to make the children fruit pies. Taylor had watered the horses, and brought them inside the fort, when Daniel returned with the boys ; the gate was locked, the dogs were shut out, and the settlers were soon seated in a cosy circle round the large table, and

enjoying the simple meal which Amy had put on it. After supper each produced some little job to do. Walter had to tell again how he crouched under the roots of the mosquito tree when flying herds of animals dashed past him, and the sea of fire passed over him; he was obliged to answer a hundred questions—pitied at one moment, laughed at at another, but heartily joining in the fun. The evening was spent in the most cheerful humour, and it was later than usual ere the settlers sought their beds, and gave themselves up to an undisturbed sleep.

A peaceful silence lay over the fort. The horses were lying in their stables, and Pluto was stretched out motionless in the courtyard. It was midnight, when Daniel was aroused by the rather distant barking of the dogs outside the fort. He sat up in bed and listened to the noise, which rapidly drew nearer. The dogs were unmistakeably retreating before an enemy, and their barking became with each moment more savage and ferocious. Presently one of them howled and yelled loudly, and soon after all reached the stockade, where Pluto joined in their tremendous row with his deep bass notes. The negro leapt out of bed, and went to wake Walter, but the latter was up already, and asked, "What is the matter with the dogs?"

"Indians must be driving them back, for I heard the barking of the dogs a long way out in the prairie. Dress yourself quickly, and fetch your weapons whilst I wake Mr. Taylor."

With these words Daniel rushed to the farmer's room, and was going to knock at the door, when the latter came out and said in considerable alarm—

"I believe there are Indians before the fort; let us make haste down into the yard with our guns, before they climb over the palisades: it is so dark out there that you cannot see your hand before you."

"I will soon have a light. Make haste, fetch your fowling-pieces. Fred and Charley must help," the negro cried, and ran out into the yard, where it was so dark that he could hardly see the points of the stockade standing out against the sky. Here he found Walter, who was watching the top of the palisades with a fowling-piece in his hand, his double rifle on his back, and revolvers in his belt, while Pluto was running up and down the fence with furious barking.

"Take care, young gentleman, that no savage climbs over. I will light the fires directly, and then do you go into that tower," Daniel said; then hurried to the framework, as previously described, and filled the iron cage with pine chips. At this moment Pluto sprang furiously up at the wooden wall, and a dark human form appeared above it.

"Walter, Walter, look there," the negro shouted, on noticing the Redskin on the palisades, but the boy had already fired, and the Indian disappeared with an awful yell. The crack of the gun and the shriek of the Indian were, however, answered by a fiendish yell outside the fort, which seemed to issue from a hundred throats.

The flames of the lighted pine chips now flared up from the cage, and a moment after Daniel drew it up, so that the vicinity of the fort was brilliantly illumined. A more furious yell was now raised outside the fort, and

Walter, who had leapt into one of the turrets, and was looking out through a loophole, saw the Indians madly running down the hill in a confused mob.

"They did not expect that," Daniel said, as he hastened to fill and light the second iron cage. "They have had a fright, but will soon return."

The second cage now threw its fiery light over the palisades, and Taylor went into the turret near it with Fred and Charley, while Daniel joined Walter at the other angle of the front stockade. The savages had collected in the tall grass out of range, and the besieged saw to their terror that the number of their assailants exceeded one hundred. Daniel, however, cheered up his companions, and assured them that the savages would certainly keep aloof from the fort if they fired plenty of buck-shot among them; for so many bullets at one discharge would be something new to them, and drive them away in terror. He took advantage of the moment to fetch all the fire-arms out of the house, and bring a supply of powder and shot. After distributing them, he returned to Walter and looked out at the Indians.

"They are consulting how they had best attack," he said to Walter. "They are Horse Indians, for I can see their horses a little further back. There they are running to them; what can they intend?"

In truth, all the Indians had hurried to their horses, but the besieged could not perceive what they were doing. It soon became clear to them, however; for they saw their enemies advance with their lassoes in their hands, while they carried bows and arrows in the quiver over their shoulders, and their tomahawks in a girdle round the waist.

"They have fetched their lassoes to throw them over the top of the palisades, and climb up them. They intend to storm. Shoot into the thickest lot, for the shot will produce a better effect," Daniel said to his companion, while the Indians separated into three bands. Suddenly one of them gave the war-yell, and then all joined in a hideous howl.

"It is the war-cry of the Comanches ; take care not to miss," Daniel shouted, and then said to Walter, "always fire where there are several together, and not too close, so that the shot may spread."

The savages dashed up like a tornado in three bands, and got within forty yards of the palisades, but at this moment fire flashed from the loopholes, and the deadly lead from the guns of the settlers pattered in a shower on the naked bodies of the Indians, so that they fled in wild confusion. They soon halted again, however, threw their lassoes over the tops of the palisades, and began climbing up. The murderous fire, however, kept up on them from both turrets, brought down the majority of them, and only three succeeded in springing inside the fort uninjured. They had scarce touched the ground, ere Pluto pulled one down and Walter shot the savage with his revolver ; Taylor killed the second with a rifle bullet, and Daniel rushed on the third, knife in hand, and rolled with him on the ground. The struggle only lasted a few seconds, for the negro leapt up from his slain foe, and hurried to Walter, to look through the loophole again. The Indians had fled, and were collecting again out of range, but many wounded were writhing on the grass in front of the palisades, and

several dead lay around. At this moment Daniel ran to the back of the fort, and let down the ladder to the rock in the stream, while shouting to his friends—"Quick, quick, escape to the wood, Mrs. Taylor and Amy, before it is too late."

The two ladies had come out of the house pale and trembling, and, as if impelled by a higher power, all obeyed the negro's summons. Taylor went down to the rock first, his wife followed, then came his children, and Walter stood still, hesitating on the ladder as he seized the negro's hand, and said, "You will go with us, Daniel?"

"No, no, I shall stay, for there is *one* way of saving the settlement. Begone, begone, lead your family through the forest and hasten to Warwick's; the Almighty will take you under His protection!"

With these words the faithful black friend drove his dear young master down the ladder, and he too reached the rock. Taylor then leapt with the rest into the canoe, and paddled to the opposite bank. The negro on returning to the fort, took his double rifle, opened the gate, and darted out in front of the palisade, where he displayed himself to the still consulting Redskins in the bright gleam of the fire.

"Do you know the Black Panther of the Delawares?" he shouted in a thundering voice to the Comanches, and swung his axe high over his head in the air, so that the polished steel glistened in the fire-light. "Which of you wishes to lift the scalp of a Delaware? The Delawares will take in payment for it as many Comanches scalps as it contains hairs. Come on, if you wish to conquer

the Black Panther, but bring your best weapons with you."

The negro then raised the fearful war-yell of the Delawares, and brandishing his weapons over his head, performed the war-dance to this awful melody.

The surprise and terror of the savages were evidently great, for they stood motionless, and gazed up at the black Delaware, upon whom the light of the flickering pine chips was cast; but they did not reflect long, for they only consulted for a few minutes, then threw their weapons from them and advanced towards Daniel, with their arms folded on their chest. The chief acted as spokesman, and said—

"The Comanches are friends of the Delawares, and friends of the Black Panther. They did not know that a Delaware lived with these pale-faces, or else they would not have aimed at their lives. Allow us to take our fallen brothers with us, and extinguish your fires; you can sleep in peace."

With these words he offered Daniel his hand, repeated the signal of friendship, and made a sign to his warriors to remove the dead and wounded. The negro informed him that three bodies were lying inside the fort, and went into it, followed by a number of savages, who removed the bodies. Within an hour the Comanches had disappeared, and the fires in the cages were extinguished.

Daniel sat down at the large table in the keeping room, and a dull lamp burned before him. He had laid his forehead on his hand, and was reflecting on the consequences of this night. There could be no doubt but that the Delawares would soon be informed of his presence here, and

would at once come back to seize him. What should he do? If he went away the Taylors would either lose their lives, or, if they escaped, their property, for the Delawares would destroy the whole settlement. In that case he would merely have saved it from the Comanches, to leave its destruction to the Delawares. If he remained and surrendered to Leopard, he knew that a fearful death mercilessly awaited him. He sat for a long time motionless at the table, and thought of the future of his friends, and the pale gleams of approaching day stole through the door as he rose and went out to take the horses to grass. He had made up his mind to remain and give himself up to the Delawares.

After he had led the horses out to their pasture, he put everything in order in the fort that had been upset during the night's confusion; he cleaned the guns, loaded them, hung them up on the wall in Taylor's room, and spent the day at work in the fort and garden. He was easy about his friends reaching the settlement on the Choctaw in safety, for Walter was with them, and he felt convinced that all the men would hurry up from there at once to drive the Indians off. Such was the case; the sun was still high on the western horizon when a band of forty horsemen, with old Warwick at their head, galloped out of the wood towards the fort.

Taylor and Walter were among them, and their surprise was great when Daniel came out of the fort, and told them that the Comanches had retired peaceably; on their inquiring how this was possible, and what had induced them to do so, the negro said that he had gone out to them and

talked with them, and told them that the men on the Choctaw would soon be here and pursue them as far as their horses could carry them. Although this statement appeared to Warwick and his companions enigmatical and incredible, there was the fact that nothing was injured inside or outside the fort, and that the savages had retired.

The faithful negro was greatly praised for his conduct, and Warwick expressed his opinion that Daniel possessed some incantation, through which he had subdued the Redskins. The Choctaw settlers soon returned home, and with them Warwick's two sons; but the old gentleman resolved to remain till Mrs. Taylor and her children returned on the following day.

Walter had led the family safely through the forest by night, and had reached Warwick's settlement with them about midday, for walking through the tall prairie grass had been very fatiguing to Mrs. Taylor and the children. Their fear and horror of the savages had alone rendered it possible for them to cover the distance without stopping, and they reached their sympathizing friends in a state of utter exhaustion. Warwick's two sons were now going to bear them the glad tidings that all danger was past, and conduct them back to the fort on the following day on horseback. Walter rode out to meet them, and they reached their home safely before dinner-time. Mrs. Taylor invoked all imaginable blessings on the faithful negro, and her thanks would have no end. Old Warwick rejoiced at the successful result, although the Taylors had been exposed to such dangers; for now that the Comanches, the

most powerful tribe in these parts, had given up their attack, he thought they would be safe from all the other savages, and predicted undisturbed tranquillity on their property. His lengthened experience, his acquaintance with the habits of the Redskins, and his confident language cheered the Taylors, and calmed their mind, for the fearful yells of the savages still rang in their ears. Their old honest friend jested and laughed at the various events of the night, and did everything in his power to encourage the alarmed settlers. He stopped with them till sunset, when he bade them a hearty farewell, promised to come again soon, and then started homeward with his two sons.

The careless tranquillity and happy peace which the settlers had hitherto enjoyed had now been rudely shaken, however, and they saw every night set in with fear and trembling. Daniel did all in his power to appear calm and free from care, in order to cheer his friends, and conceal from them his own mental struggles, which called up before him his own inevitable and frightful end, wherever he went or whatever he did. Days and weeks passed by, however, without the peace of the fort being in the slightest degree disturbed, and spring, with its thousand beauties and countless charms, succeeded in cheering and rejoicing the hearts of the oppressed settlers. Nature herself was joyously disposed, and it was scarce possible to think of anything sad or horrible, for a picture of eternal peace surrounded the settlement. Their former happiness, their former confidence in the future again returned to the Taylors; but Daniel's heart became daily more gloomy, he closed the fort at night with a shudder, and with a shudder

he looked round it in the morning. He did not wish to escape his fate, he was willing to sacrifice himself for his friends ; but he felt a tremor when he thought of the frightful vengeance of the Indians. He was always the first to peep through the loopholes and see whether the Delawares had not invested the fort ; for so soon as they made their appearance, he intended to make Taylor hand him over to them, so that the Indians might not have the slightest cause to reproach his friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETURN OF THE DELAWARES.—LEOPARD'S RESOLUTION.—WALTER'S SELF-SACRIFICE.—A SILENT DEPARTURE.—DANIEL'S DESPAIR.—THE HIDE THROUGH THE PRAIRIE.—THE OAK WOOD.—THE TROOP OF WILD HORSES.—WALTER SEES AN OLD FRIEND.—LEOPARD PREPARES FOR THE CHASE.

ONE morning Daniel rose from his bed, his thoughts busy with the Delawares, and went into the courtyard to look out over the prairie, when the loud noisy barking of the dogs outside the fort made him start as if struck. He fancied he could see his assassins approaching, ran to a loophole, and the thought proved to be truth; for the Delawares, with Leopard at their head, were galloping through the undulating grass towards the fort. Love of life, the instinct of self-preservation, made the negro think for an instant of the ladder and canoe; there was still time to fly; he could still escape death at the hands of these savages! He looked at the slope where the ladder lay, but he saw, too, the closed door behind which his friends were slumbering calmly, and without fear, and all his hesitation and despondency disappeared; he resolved to give himself up to his enemies.

The noise of the dogs now brought Walter and Taylor down into the courtyard in considerable alarm, but Daniel

shouted to them that the Delawares were coming up, and they had nothing to apprehend from them.

"The Delawares—surely not those under Leopard's command," Taylor exclaimed, much alarmed ; "in that case hurry to the forest, Daniel, so that they may not find you here."

"They have come to fetch me, and I will go with them," the negro replied, resolutely.

"Never, Daniel ; we would sooner all be buried under the ruins of the fort. Go, good Daniel ; run to the boat ; there is still time," Taylor cried imploringly, and drew the negro toward the ladder.

"It is of no use ; the Delawares have learned from the Comanches that I am here ; for I told the latter so on that night, to make them refrain from further hostilities. I should condemn you all to death by flying. I will deliver myself up to Leopard," Daniel said with great determination, and refused to get on the ladder which Walter had let down on to the rock. The latter as well as Taylor threw their arms round the faithful friend, and urged him to fly and leave them to their fate.

Daniel, however, adhered to his resolution, and a few minutes after pointed to the opposite bank, where several Delawares now emerged from the forest.

"Well, then, we will die with you, Daniel ; these barbarians shall take neither you nor us alive. Walter, fetch the fire-arms," Taylor exclaimed, beside himself ; then flung his arms round his friend again, and implored him to defend himself.

"Halloa—white man ; listen to me. I am Leopard, the

Delaware chief," the Indian was now heard shouting in a thundering voice on the other side of the stockade, while smiting the gate with his tomahawk.

"What do you want; do you come to me as a friend or an enemy? Remember that I am under the protection of the United States, in whose service you are."

"I come to you as a friend, and request you to deliver to me my property, the Black Panther, who is dwelling under your roof."

"You have no claim to him, for your father stole his parents, and made them his slaves," Taylor replied, boldly.

"Trouble yourself about your own affairs and not about mine. I will take away my property, the Black Panther, from here, dead or alive. He cannot escape me, for I will invest your fortress till hunger kills you all, or till you surrender the Black Panther to me. I am not acting against the wishes of the great father, the President of the United States, for I shall not employ any violence against you or climb over your wooden walls; no Delaware shall enter your house, you will be allowed to go in and out freely, but I will let no provisions into your fort till the Black Panther is in my hands."

"I will follow you, Leopard, although you have no right to me," Daniel shouted to the Indian, but Taylor checked him, and said—

"In that case, chief, retire from my property, so far that my bullets cannot reach you. I will defend myself and my friend Daniel, and my friends from the Choctaw will soon be here to help me."

"Do as you please. The Leopard only speaks once," the chief shouted from the outside, and made no further reply.

Mrs. Taylor and the children were frightened to death, and heard with horror the subject of discussion. They wept and clung imploringly to Daniel, who adhered to his resolution of leaving the fort, and giving himself up to the Delawares.

When Taylor looked through a loophole, he saw that the Indians had put up their tents round the fort out of gunshot, and that their horses were grazing further back.

"You must grant me one favour, Daniel. You must stop here till I have spoken with the chief once again," Taylor now said to the negro. "I will go out to him and offer him all my ready money for your liberation. I have more than he can ask for you."

Daniel represented to him that it would be of no use. Mrs. Taylor and the children hung round Taylor and did not wish to let him go out, but he adhered to his resolution and opened the gate. He ordered Walter to shut it after him, and walked down the hill to the tent, before which he saw the chief seated.

"You are welcome in my camp," Leopard said, as he walked toward his visitor and offered him his hand. "The Delawares are friends of the white men."

With these words he led Taylor to his tent, and invited him to sit down on a buffalo hide in front of it.

"Prove to me that you are my friend, then. I ask a service of friendship from you, and do not wish to harm you. Sell me the negro. I am ready to give you several

thousand dollars for him. I have no more money than that," Taylor said, and imploringly seized the chief's hand.

"Money cannot requite a wrong done to a Delaware. Keep your money and give me my Black Panther," the chief replied, with unflinching determination.

"Well, I will try whether my friends on the Choctaw will advance me any money on my farm. I am willing to pay you every farthing I can raise for the negro," Taylor again urged.

"And if you could give me all the money of the pale-faces, I would not sell you the Black Panther for it," Leopard replied, with a dark frown, and remained inexorable to all the farmer's proposals and entreaties.

With a bleeding heart Taylor returned to the fort, where he shared the grief of his family at the inevitable fate of their beloved friend.

The heavily-oppressed party spent the day in lamenting, with the exception of Walter, for he had an idea which continually appeared to him more promising. He became silent and thoughtful, and at sunset said to Taylor—

"I will speak with the chief, perhaps I may succeed in rendering him more inclined to yield, for he has always been fond of me."

Taylor threw his arm round the brave lad's neck, and pressed him fervently to his chest as he said—

"Your object is so good, Walter, that I trust heaven will support you; but I am afraid that your efforts will be of no use either. Go, in Heaven's name, and try to soften the savage's heart."

Taylor then accompanied Walter to the gate and let him out.

When the lad walked down the hill the chief came to meet him a long way, and received him with the words—

“Why will you compel me to refuse a request of yours, as you know that I cannot grant it to you, and yet are aware how fond I am of you? Have I not told you how sorry I felt that you were not born a Delaware?”

“And suppose I were to become a Delaware—a faithful Delaware, body and soul. Would you not prefer me to your slave?”

At these words a sudden gleam of sunshine seemed to play over the chief's gloomy features; he looked at the lad in surprise, suddenly seized both his hands, drew him to his chest, and threw his muscular arms round him.

“You a Delaware?” he exclaimed, forgetting his stoicism. “Why, I would give a hundred Black Panthers, if necessary, in exchange for you. Your heart is great, it is greater for friendship than mine; but I will be as true a friend to you as you are to the Black Panther. Yes, boy, you shall become a Delaware, a friend of mine, and I will give up the Black Panther for you.”

“You must not only give him his liberty, but he must remain under your protection as a Delaware with my family, so that they and their property may be safe from the hostilities of other Indians. If you consent to this, I will go with you, and be a true friend to you,” Walter said, with a beaming look, for he now not alone hoped to save his friend Daniel, but also to ward off all danger from those dear to him.

“I grant it. The Black Panther is free. He will re-

main as a Delaware with your people, and if any one disturb their peace, the Delawares will throw his head to the wolves. You will go with me, Walter. You shall sleep in my tent, eat with me, hunt and fight with me, and the Delawares will love you and give their last scalp for you should you incur any danger."

Saying this, the chief offered Walter his hand, and the latter agreed.

"But will your uncle let you go with me?" the Indian asked thoughtfully; "I must not steal you."

"I shall go with you of my own free will, but of course must do so secretly. I will tell my uncle in writing that I have gone away with you voluntarily, and leave the letter in my room. This night, when all are sleeping in the fort, I will slip away and come to you, and before day-break we must be far from here. Have everything in readiness for a speedy departure. I shall be with you after midnight."

With the consoling thought of protecting his family from all future danger, and saving his friend Daniel from death, Walter left the chief and returned to the fort with a light heart.

"You bring good news, Walter, I can read it in your face," Taylor said, as he received the boy at the gate, and seized his hand with renewed hopes.

"The chief is in a more conciliatory temper, he will speak with you further to-morrow," Walter replied, resolved not to betray in his features the resolution he was determined to carry out for the welfare of his family.

"Thank heaven!" Taylor said; "now I trust every

thing will turn out for the best. Walter, you are really our guardian angel."

Mrs. Taylor thanked the lad with tears in her eyes for this fresh proof of his affection, and Daniel with the warmest gratitude yielded to the hope that his fate would take a favourable change. When the sun set, and Taylor reminded them that the horses must be brought inside the fort, Walter said—

"I will lead them down to water, and then bring them back to their grazing-ground; we will leave them out to-night, for it would be displaying suspicions of the Delawares if we brought them in."

Taylor agreed in this view, and Walter led the horses to drink and then picketted them out again, but he hobbled his chestnut at no great distance from the chief's tent. When he returned to the fort, he went to his room and hurriedly wrote a farewell letter to his family. He explained to them the reason why he left them, told them how delighted he was to save them from all dangers, and begged them not to grieve at his departure, for he should be all right, and intended to visit them next autumn. He concluded the letter with a request that they would not follow him, for he was quite determined to stay with the Delawares, and nothing could induce him to return to the fort. He addressed these last words especially to Daniel, entreating him to remain a faithful friend to the family, and thus make up for his own departure. The tears that filled his eyes while writing scarce permitted him to end the letter, and he was obliged to break off several times. When he had at length concluded it, he addressed the letter to

his uncle, and concealed it in his leathern jacket. He hastily put all the articles he intended to take with him in his game-bag, hung it up with his weapons, and then returned to his family to have supper with them.

With a heavy heart he sat down to the table; it was the last time that he would have his family around him, and, unseen, he wiped away the tears which he could not restrain. His silence and earnestness were unnoticed, for the others were sitting sorrowfully thinking of Daniel's fate, which would not be decided till the morrow. Walter was the first to leave the table, and go to bed, and the others followed his example; for the general feeling was too sad to induce them to remain longer together. Walter kissed his relatives, as he always did on retiring for the night; but he gave them a longer and more affectionate kiss than usual, for he was bidding them a silent farewell. He wept bitterly while doing so, which was ascribed to the uncertainty about Daniel's fate, and Taylor tried to console him, and bade him have confidence in the Almighty, who would assist them. All retired to their beds, but sleep remained absent for a long while, and it was not till midnight that the inhabitants of the fort closed their eyes; but Walter was still awake, felt the hands of his watch every now and then to see how late it was, and listened to Daniel's breathing, to make sure that he was sound asleep.

It was long past midnight when Walter rose gently from his bed, hurriedly dressed himself, and laid the letter for his uncle on the table. Then he buckled on his revolver and knife, hung the game-bag over his shoulder, and took up his jaguar skin and woollen rug, seized his

rifle, and crept cautiously out into the yard. Pluto ran joyfully up to him, but Walter bade the dog lie down, and walked noiselessly to the gate, which he opened. He carried his baggage outside, and then returned to the fort to fetch his saddle. When he passed through the gate again, Pluto tried to follow him ; but he drove the poor fellow back, and pulled the gate after him. Then he hurried down the hill with his traps to the chief's tent, where the latter gladly received him at his fire, and told him that everything was ready for a start.

Walter fetched his mustang up to the fire, and began saddling it, in which the chief assisted him, and then mounted, while the Indians collected round him on horseback, and heartily welcomed their new comrade. The chief was soon on horseback too, and the troop set out, with Walter at their head, while the latter kept his tear-laden eyes fixed on the dark outline of the fort, and bade his last silent farewell to his beloved friends reposing there. They noiselessly rode through the darkness, and ere long the last reflection of the abandoned camp-fire and the dark line of the stockade had disappeared from sight.

In the fort all this time there was a perfect silence, for the usual noise which the horses generally made during the night did not disturb the tranquillity.

As day broke, Daniel rose with the firm resolution to surrender himself this day to the chief, if the impending negotiation with him led to no satisfactory settlement. He slipped quietly to the door, in order not to disturb Walter's rest, when he noticed all at once that the latter's bed was unoccupied. The negro started and looked immediately at

the wall, where the boy's weapons generally hung; they were gone too. Then he saw the letter lying on the table, and recognized his friend's handwriting, for the latter had given him lessons in writing. A letter from Walter addressed to his uncle—what could be the meaning of it?—why was Walter not here? The negro trembled all over; he rushed with the letter in his hand out to the gate—it was ajar, and the Indians had disappeared! Daniel stood there as if paralyzed, and looked at the letter, which trembled in his hand: the paper told him what the boy had done for him. Without a word, without a tear, he sank on his knees, and pressed the letter to his breast. He did not know what he was doing, did not know what he ought to do; what had happened was too monstrous, too terrible for him to be able to comprehend it: it hurled him to the ground like some mighty misfortune, and his feelings almost choked him.

Suddenly, however, he jumped up, ran to Taylor's room, and yelled—

“Walter has gone; Mr. Taylor, Walter has gone.”

“What do you say—Walter gone?” Taylor cried, as he rushed out of the room, and hastily seized the letter which the negro held out to him.

“He has gone, sir; gone away with the Delawares. Read, read quickly, I must hurry after him, and free him from the hands of the Delawares; it was I they wanted, and not Walter, and they shall have me,” the negro shrieked in the utmost desperation, and stared at the letter, which Taylor had opened with a trembling hand, and was now reading with feverish haste.

"Walter, Walter !" he then said with a look of despair, and let his head sink on his hands.

"He must return ; you shall have him back again," the negro cried, and was about to hurry away, when Taylor seized his arm, and said—

"It is of no use, Daniel ; he will not return. Do you fancy that Walter would purchase his liberty with your life ?"

"He shall, he must return. The Delawares shall kill me, and then Walter will not remain with them," Daniel cried, and tried to tear himself away from Taylor ; but the latter held him back, and said—

"Well, then, hear what he writes, and what he says to you in this letter ; you will then see how useless it would be for you to follow him."

Taylor now read the letter to the negro, and the latter stood as if stunned, wrung his hands together, and groaned again and again,—

"Oh ! why did I not give myself up at once ?"

"It was not your fault, Daniel, for we prevented you. Heaven, which has brought all this about, will protect our dear boy, and lead him back to our arms again. Walter lives, he lives only for us, and knows that with him we have lost the larger part of our happiness. He will return."

In this way Taylor tried to console the faithful negro and himself, and forget his heartrending sorrow ; but when he informed his wife and family of Walter's self-sacrifice, grief overpowered them all, and they broke into loud lamentation.

Walter was still riding silently by the side of the chief, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

"Your heart is sad, Walter," Leopard said to him sympathizingly, "and that makes me sad too; but my joy at your becoming my friend is great, and will make you glad once more. The Delawares will love you, and you will some day become a great man among them; they will follow you when the Leopard grows too old to mount his war-horse, and his eye too weak to send a bullet through the heart of the wild animals. You shall have the finest horses, and the squaws of the Delawares shall prepare the most splendid skins for you, and make you the softest hunting-shirts and gaiters."

"I shall be satisfied with anything, so long as I know that my friends on Bear River are doing well," Walter answered, looking down with moist eyes at the brilliant black mane which his chestnut was shaking in its impetuosity.

"No one shall or will disturb the peace of your friends, and you will see them twice a-year."

"You have promised me that, Leopard, and must keep your promise; only with that hope can I be happy while away from them."

"You will be happy, for our life is a happier one than that of the white men. We have everything our hearts can long for. The white men never obtain that for which they strive. Money is their sole thought, and robs them of their rest; but we laugh at it. Money cannot make us merry or sad."

Walter said little, but the chief did not cease talking to

him, and describing the life of the Indians to him from its fairest side.

While talking thus, they hastened towards the north-west over the flower-clad prairie, on which the dry grass had fallen withered to the ground, and the bright green stalks had sprung up among it with the brilliant flora of spring. The chief intended to follow the skirt of the prairie-fire as far as the Red River, because he hoped to meet with the most game there. He rode with Walter some considerable distance ahead of the other Indians, in order to give his young friend an opportunity to shoot some game during their journey. The troop of warriors rode slowly after them ; behind them came the horses, loaded with the tents, implements, and provisions of every description, while the procession was closed by the squaws, who drove on the pack-horses, and kept them together. Walter during the course of the day brought down several head of game, which the chief, proud at the boy's skill, left for the people following him to collect. The evening brought them to the oak-wood, where Walter had shot the terrible grizzly bear, and the bivouac for the night was prepared by the side of the water where he found Rupert again. He took advantage of the twilight to go out hunting, and killed two antelopes, which were carried triumphantly into camp by the three Indians who accompanied him.

At sunrise the band set out again, and followed the skirt of the oak-wood, which ran as far as the Red River, and along which the prairie had been scorched by the tremendous fire. The young grass, however, had already covered it with a carpet a foot deep, on all parts of which

buffaloes, deer, and antelopes were grazing. It was a glorious day's march, under the shady foliage, over the fine, close grass-plot, from which the massive tree-trunks rose. An extensive prospect was enjoyed, as a thicket nowhere impeded the view, and the eye was almost everywhere attracted by game. Very numerous were the flocks of wild turkey-cocks, which assembled by hundreds at this season, while the hens were sitting on their eggs by themselves, in the tall prairie grass, or in the coppices. They flew off in long lines before the approaching band of riders, and the chief and his young friend constantly galloped up to them, till they noisily rose in the air, and settled in the lofty oaks. Then every shot from the two riders brought down one of the colossal birds: and, to Leopard's delight, Walter shot several of them with a revolver. Without resting, they rode the entire day in the cool shadow of the forest, while the sun poured its hot beams on the tops of the trees, and here and there cast a dazzling light on the fresh green soil.

"A troop of wild horses is grazing over there, and has not noticed us yet," the chief said to Walter; and pointed under the trees to the skirt of the prairie.

"I should like to ride up to them," the boy remarked, "for they are such noble animals. I always fancy that a horse is much prouder when at liberty than in captivity."

"If it affords you any pleasure, ride behind me, and I will lead you close up to them; but you must lie over your horse's head," the chief replied, and then rode sideways under the oaks till he had a considerable number of trees between him and the horses, so that he was more or less concealed from them. Then he rode towards them,

though constantly choosing the direction in which he had most trees before him. They were about five hundred yards from the wild horses, which were still grazing peacefully, when Walter suddenly whispered to the chief, "Stop, stop, Leopard, hold your horse in;" and rapidly drew his telescope from his pocket, and placed it to his eye. The chief obeyed, and then, like his companion, looked at the horses.

"I suppose you are looking for your dead favourite among them," Leopard said, laughingly.

"Yes, indeed; there is a horse standing there which looks exactly like my cream-colour. I only wish it would turn aside a little," Walter replied, with great eagerness, and held the glass motionless to his eye. After a pause, he added, with greater excitement, "Now it is turning—it is really my cream-colour; I can see the mark of the saddle on its back."

With these words, Walter, quite wild with joy, pointed to a horse which was grazing on the prairie, a little apart from the troop.

"It is possible. Let me have a look through your glass," the chief said, and took it from the boy. After gazing at the animal for a little while, he hurriedly added, "That horse has carried a saddle before now, and if you say it is your cream-colour, you shall ride it again. Remain under these oaks till I return; I must mount my war-horse if I intend to catch your animal."

With these words, he galloped back by the road he had come. The other Indians were still too far in the rear for Walter to see anything of them. With a beating heart, he

kept the telescope fixed on the horse, and more and more convinced himself that it was his lost Rupert. He impatiently looked back through the wood to see whether the chief were coming, and listened for the sound of his horse's hoofs. Nothing was to be seen of him yet, and Walter looked again anxiously at the troop to see whether they had become restless. The animals, however, were grazing quietly, and here and there one of them lay down on the grass. It seemed as if Rupert were still regarded by the others as a stranger, for he always kept at some distance from them, and this confirmed Walter in his opinion that it was his horse. The chief remained away a terribly long time, so it seemed to Walter, and the boy's impatience, as well as his apprehension that the troop would suddenly start off, increased with each moment; but all at once he saw Leopard approaching him from the side, and no great distance from him. With a measured pace, his noble white stallion moved between the closely-grown trunks. It was adorned with a magnificent jaguar skin, spread over the saddle, on which the Indian chief was seated, perfectly naked. A broad strip of bright red cloth alone fell from his hips, and, in lieu of weapons, he held a very long lasso curled up in his hand. His muscular, graceful, bronzed form sat erect on the white steed, and his bright black hair hung down over his broad shoulders. When he came nearer, he checked his horse's pace even more, and lay down behind its arched neck. He soon reached Walter, and said—

“If your cream-colour is really so swift-footed, and has such a long breath as you told me, it will be a sharp chase; but I have never yet seen a horse which could keep up with

my stallion. Keep close behind me, and we will ride as near as we can, unnoticed, to the cream-colour ; but if it catches sight of us, there will be no time to lose. Then you need only keep your eye on me, for you can see my white horse for a long distance."

"If I could get up to Rupert, without the troop bolting off, he would come to me directly he recognized me," Walter said, looking longingly at the horse.

"Liberty tastes too sweet, and the animal has enjoyed it too long to return to captivity voluntarily. It is just the same with the Indians : they are constantly being driven closer to the Andes, where they must perish with the buffalo for want of food ; and yet, although they can foresee their fate, they will sooner die than endure the yoke of civilization. We shall be obliged to lay the fetters on your cream-colour again by force, if it is to recognize your authority. But now follow me," the chief replied, turned his impatiently stamping stallion in the direction of Rupert, and moved from tree to tree, without the animal noticing him till he came within a hundred yards of it. Here the oaks were much more scattered, and the white stallion scarce emerged from their shade, ere the whole wild troop started and fled in the utmost confusion.

At the same moment, however, the chief gave his stallion the reins with a loud yelling hunting-cry, and dashed after them as if carried on the wind. In a few instants he reached the prairie. The wild horses which had been scattered under the oaks collected into a dense body, the cream-colour taking the lead, and away they darted over the green grass, which glistened in the sunlight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INVOLUNTARY RIDE.—A PLUNGE IN THE RIVER.—THE CAMP
FIRE.—RUPERT IS RECOVERED.—THE COMANCHE CAMP.—THE
TRADING POST.—THE BARTER.—BUFFALO TONGUES IN REQUEST.
—PREPARATIONS FOR THE HUNT.—THE FALSE BUFFALO.

WALTER's mustang evidently remembered the period of its own liberty, for it galloped as if mad after the flying troop, and soon caught up the rear-guard. The chief, however, dashed past after the cream-colour, which had already gained an advance of several hundred yards, while the wild horses started away in terror from the Indian, and sought safety by running off to the side. Walter wanted to follow the chief, but his chestnut declined obedience, and galloped, in spite of bridle and spur, into the very centre of the flying troop. Away they dashed up hill and down at a frenzied pace, for the wild horses gazed in horror at the human form that rose in the centre of them, and redoubled their efforts to escape. The chestnut, however, remained among them; its shaggy mane played round the young rider on its back, its long black tail lashed furiously, and it snorted wildly through its parted nostrils. Walter looked in despair at the chief, who was now only perceptible as a white fading point in the distance; but in vain did he employ all his strength to keep back his obstinate horse: it darted on with him without a check, and with it the whole troop of wild horses, till the very ground quivered, and the

thunder of their hoofs filled the air. Walter now yielded to his fate, mile after mile was left behind, and his horse as well as its wild comrades were covered with white foam.

Ere long they came to an oak forest, which ran along the edge of the prairie, and Walter thought with horror of the danger that threatened him in darting between the trees ; but in vain did he once more employ his utmost efforts to check his wild animal in its mad career, for it remained in the centre of the flying mass. The oak wood was reached, and they galloped into it and between the trunks at such a pace that Walter fancied every moment he would be knocked off his horse ; however, he managed so far to guide his horse as to escape a collision. Suddenly he noticed in front of him a broad expanse of water, running along the skirt of the forest, and which could only be the Red River. A gleam of hope cheered Walter, for he thought that the troop would be checked by the water, and he should have a chance of mastering his horse again. He saw the foremost reach the river bank in their mad flight, but they leaped down, and all their wild companions followed them, the water dashing high above their heads. Walter also soused in with his horse ; he heard and saw nothing more, for the current closed over him, and for a moment he quite lost breath. He clung tight to the chestnut, however, which, surrounded by hundreds of horses that looked up out of the river round it, was hastily cutting through the rapid stream to reach the opposite bank. This last effort luckily exhausted the strength of the wild horses ; they mounted the bank with difficulty, and then went off in all directions at a trot, in order to escape the terribly strange

form on the chestnut's back. The latter made several fruitless exertions to follow them, but only resisted its master for a while, and then yielded to him.

Wet through to the skin, and mounted on an utterly exhausted horse, Walter found himself alone many miles from his friends, and parted from them by a rapid and wide river. He dismounted, and his first thought was turned to his fire-arms, which had also been under water, though only for a moment. He quickly discharged his rifle and revolvers, and to his delight did not have a single misfire. His powder-flask was perfectly water-tight; hence he soon reloaded, and began reflecting on his position. Had not the river been in front of him he would have ridden back along the road he had come, and looked for the Delawares; but with his tired horse he could not trust himself again to the current, and he saw no other resource but waiting on the bank and seeing whether his friends would come to him. Without doubt the latter, on missing him, would follow the broad trail the wild horses had left behind them, and he resolved to kindle a large fire, so that the Delawares might perceive where he was, if they did not reach the river till night, for the sun was not very high, and it was uncertain whether the race after Rupert might not have led the chief a long distance.

While the chestnut, which Walter fastened to a tree, was revelling in the long grass, its rider collected dry wood to light the fire, which he very much needed at the moment, for he was beginning to feel chill in his wet clothes. He took his tinder-box from his pocket, and pulled it out of the tightly-fastened bladder, in which he always kept it to

protect it from the wet. Then he struck a light with flint and steel, and blew up a flame, with which he lit a wisp of dry grass. The fire soon flared up from the collected brushwood, and played round the heavy log which Walter threw upon it. The heat was soon so great that he was obliged to retire several yards, and he dried himself by turning round and round. He then fetched some large boughs from a fallen mosquito tree, in order to keep up the fire during the night, as he felt certain that his friends would not make their appearance till late ; but the sun had scarce set ere the chief's hearty shout reached his ear from the other side of the river. He soon saw him ride out from under the oaks at the head of his band, and how great was Walter's joy when he recognized his dear Rupert walking patiently by the side of Leopard. When the chief reached the bank, he shouted to Walter to follow the stream, as some miles further down there was a very shallow place, where it could be crossed without getting wet. Walter at once mounted, and hurried along the bank, for he could scarce await the moment when he would be with his Rupert again.

The Delawares followed the river on the other bank, and Walter did not once take his eye off his favourite, which appeared to him to have grown much handsomer during its absence. At length the chief stopped, and looked round for a spot where the bank was not so steep. He found it a short distance off, guided his horse into the river, and the whole party of Redskins followed him. The water scarce came up to the horses' girths, and the river was speedily crossed. Walter had dismounted, and was

waiting with the utmost impatience by the bank, and when the cream-coloured horse ascended it he threw his arm round the neck of the beloved animal, and said with the greatest delight—

“Rupert, old boy, don't you know me? how have you been all this time?”

While saying this he patted and caressed the horse's neck, and the latter gave him to understand by a gentle whinnying that it was equally pleased to see him again.

Then, however, Walter turned with hearty assurances of his gratitude to the chief, who had been watching with much satisfaction the happiness displayed on the lad's face.

“You did not tell me too much about the cream-colour,” Leopard interrupted him; “he is as rapid as the antelope and as enduring as the buffalo, and cost my stallion a deal of perspiration. I followed him for more than twenty miles before I could throw the lasso over him, but so soon as the noose was round his neck he gave in, and let me lead him quietly. He was worth the ride, especially as I have caused my young friend so much pleasure. If I had not my war-horse I should like to have yours, for there are not many like him.”

“Yes; he is a brave good horse, and I thank you sincerely for restoring him to me. That mustang is not so faithful, and the ride might have cost my life; the wretch ran away with me, and I was obliged to keep up with the troop of wild horses whether I liked it or not.”

“I saw it,” the chief answered laughingly; “but I could not possibly let Rupert escape; I thought too that a young gentleman who had raced with a prairie fire and

beaten it, would like a merry ride in the midst of some hundreds of wild horses."

"Well, it was not so very merry, I can tell you ; it was dangerous going in the oak wood, and I shan't forget the jump into the river as long as I live."

"You are a Delaware now, and therefore no ride can be too wild for you ; we will have far merrier ones together. Where can a man feel happier than on the back of a fast horse ?"

The chief now gave his people a sign to put up the tents ; the squaws laid the buffalo hides for him and Walter on the grass, and in a very short time erected the tent behind him and his young friend. The other tents were also soon raised, the fires blazed before them, and the squaws made haste to get supper ready. The chief now informed Walter that he intended to go to a trading post of the United States, several days' journey distant ; these posts the Government has established all along the Indian territory, far away to the north, so that the Redskins may buy and barter everything they want there, without being obliged to enter the settlements. Here he purposed disposing of the proceeds of the hunting expedition, consisting of hides, bear's-grease, honey, and wax, as well as dried meat, and take in exchange various articles required for his village on the Kansas. He then intended to go to the latter place and spend a few weeks with his family before he started northwards to hunt.

Soon after supper Walter lay down to rest in the tent for he was greatly fatigued by his exertions during his wild ride ; but ere refreshing sleep fell upon him, he

thought lovingly of the dear ones he had left behind, and included them in his prayers. At daybreak he followed the example of all the Indians, and bathed in the crystal-line waters of the Red River, during which operation he admired the skill in swimming which his companions possessed, for they appeared to be as much at home in the water as on land. When the sun rose above the flat plain, and threw its golden light over the illimitable expanse of verdure, the party were again in motion, and Walter was once more seated on the back of his dear Rupert, while his chestnut was given to an Indian to ride, who would thoroughly break it in. The Indians rode for three days through an open prairie, on which a mosquito tree or a thickly-foliaged red elm^s grew here and there, and it was only at the streams they crossed, and which were carrying their waters to the Kansas, that they came to any thick growth of wood. On the third evening they reached a stream of this sort, and noticed, while some distance off, a number of tall conical tents, which indicated a large party of Indians in front of the wood which overshadowed the brook. On approaching them the Indian chief informed his young friend that it was a tribe of the Comanches encamped there. Ere long they reached the chief's tent, and were received by him with great kindness and civility. Leopard presented Walter to him as a friend who intended to remain with him, and informed him that the Black Panther of the Delawares was living on Bear Creek with Walter's uncle, and that no one was to disturb that settlement unless he wished to have the Delawares for his enemies. The Comanche chief did not appear to be greatly edified by

this statement, but had no objection to offer, and gave Leopard his assurance that the Comanches would always remain friends of the Delawares.

During the interview Walter curiously examined the tents. They were made of tanned white buffalo hide, had the shape of a sugar-loaf, and measured on the ground from twelve to fourteen feet in diameter, while their height was about sixteen. The entrance could be fastened together with strips of leather, so that the interior of the tent was protected from wind and cold. Long poles were stuck into the ground inside, which met and passed through the opening left in the top of the tent, which also acted as a chimney, for in cold weather a fire was lighted inside. Round the tent were the beds of its inhabitants, composed of hides, and from the poles which kept it stretched out hung the weapons and implements of the owner. The whole exterior of all these moveable dwellings was adorned with gaily-painted pictures, representing battles and engagements with wild beasts.

When travelling, these tents were rolled up, and carried on mules, which dragged the long poles fastened across their necks, up hill and down dale. Walter's attention was also attracted by the great number of horses and mules grazing in front of the camp, and consisting of more than five hundred of these animals. They were employed by the Indians partly for riding and partly to carry the tents, instruments, and stores, and to be killed and eaten at times when game ran short.

Leopard, after a lengthened conference with the Comanche chief, parted from him on friendly terms, begged

him to tell all the Indian tribes he might come across about the Black Panther, and then rode several miles up the stream to pass the night. The next day the Delawares reached the Government trading post, and set up their camp at no great distance from it on the bank of the river on which it was built.

It was evening, and Leopard sent one of his warriors to the chief agent to inform him of his arrival, and let him know that he desired to deal with him on the next morning. The messenger soon returned with the answer that the agent would be very glad to see the Delawares, and have it in his power to be of service to them.

At daybreak, all the articles of barter the Delawares had with them were packed up, and after breakfast their owners loaded them on their horses in order to carry them to the trading post.

Leopard and Walter accompanied them, and only the squaws remained in camp. The so-called trading post consisted of a number of wooden buildings, built in the shape of a quadrangle, and surrounded by a lofty stockade. The entrance gate led into a front yard also formed by block-houses, through which alone the interior of the fort could be reached, and the gate leading to the latter was defended by two small field-pieces, to defend it in the event of any hostile attack from the Indians. The front yard was the place where the savages were always met by the people of the settlement to make their barter, and the goods were brought there to be shown them.

The agent received Leopard and his companions with great civility, and told them that they had arrived at a very

favourable time, as he had received a large stock of goods a few days previously, and would be able to offer them a first-rate choice.

The Indians delivered their stock separately to the agent, and the latter settled with Leopard the price to be paid for each man's wares—a certain portion of which accrued to the chief. Then the warriors mentioned the articles they wished to buy, and which were brought out of the fort into the front yard. They consisted of a coarsered cloth, which the Delawares fasten round their hips, gaudy calico goods, silk handkerchiefs, looking-glasses, beads, pipes, weapons of every description, powder and shot, and tobacco. The Indians soon made their selection, and Walter was amazed at the extraordinarily high prices that were charged his friends. When all the warriors had been satisfied, Leopard selected a quantity of articles, for which he paid with his royalty on the goods sold by the Indians, and business was ended. The agent then made the chief sundry presents, and regretted that the Delawares had brought no smoked buffalo tongues with them; for which he could give a long price at the moment, as they were in great request in the eastern states.

The chief seemed pleased at the news, and answered the agent that he would at once arrange a buffalo hunt, which, if it were successful, would enable him to bring in several hundred tongues in a short time. The agent urged him to do so, and promised to lay much handsomer goods before him and his warriors.

Leopard hereupon took leave of him, the warriors carried their purchases to the camp, and within a few

hours the Delawares were on the road to the west again.

Leopard informed his young friend that he only knew of one spot where he could carry out the meditated great buffalo hunt; the only question was whether he should find large herds of the animals there. If this were the case, he would with his warriors drive them toward a deep ravine, into which they would fall, and kill themselves by hundreds.

Walter was very excited about this new mode of hunting, and the chief was obliged to tell him about many such hunts which he had made.

After riding sharply for two days they reached a small stream, which was overshadowed by narrow strips of forest. Here the camp was formed before sunset; after which the chief mounted his war-charger and Walter his chestnut, which had not been ridden during the day's march, and both hurried to a hill further west, which rose over the prairie some miles from camp. Leopard wanted to see whether buffaloes were grazing on the plain upon the other side of the hill, for that was the spot where he intended to hold the hunt. On the road to the hill the two riders came across many buffaloes; right and left, far as the eye could see, herds of these animals were visible; and when they reached the hill, whence they had an open view to the forest, they found their hopes fulfilled. The whole of the immense grassy plain was covered with buffalo herds. The chief then pointed out to Walter a clump of lofty trees on the distant horizon, and told him that the ravine was there, and that it ran for a distance of five miles. They returned home with a wish that they might find as

many buffaloes here on the next day, when the hunt was to take place.

Everybody was very busy in camp on this evening ; the men put their weapons in order, and the squaws carefully inspected the horses' gear, and repaired any damages. Some, however, were engaged in making a framework of light willow wood, which, when a buffalo hide was hung over it, looked something like a buffalo. This framework one of the Delawares would carry on his head during the hunt, and show the herds the road to the ravine. For this purpose the best runner, a tall, powerful young fellow, was selected ; and when the framework was finished, he hung the buffalo hide over it, placed it on his head, and, to the amusement of all, ran about camp with long leaps, which gained him universal applause. Walter, more especially, was greatly surprised when the monster suddenly came galloping round the chief's fire at which he was lying, and the Indian concealed in it uttered the most fearful sounds. Leopard was highly satisfied with the performance of the imitation buffalo, and told the fellow who acted it that he should have a double share of the booty if the hunt turned out successfully. After supper, and when all had lain down to rest, this young warrior mounted his horse, folded the great buffalo hide upon the saddle under him, took the framework on his shoulders, and rode off in order to reach, by a wide circuit, the ravine to which the buffaloes were to be driven. In this manner he did not at all disturb the herds on this side of the ravine, and he would be at his post at an early hour the next morning, for the purpose of acting his part as a buffalo.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BUFFALO HUNT.—THE SURROUND.—A TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER.—
THE PANTHERS.—WALTER SAVES THE DELAWARE CHIEF.—
LEOPARD'S GRATITUDE.—THE RACE.—RETURN TO THE FORT.—
REUNION OF THE FAMILY.—CONCLUSION.

At the first dawn of day the Delawares mounted their best horses, and rode, led by Leopard on his white horse and Walter on Rupert, toward the hill which the chief had visited on the previous evening. It was not quite day when they reached it, and found the entire plain covered with buffaloes up to the ravine, which was several miles distant. Many of the animals had not yet risen, but were lying carelessly in the fresh green grass. The chief now sent off his warriors to the right and left, in order to form a wide semicircle round the herds. He himself remained with Walter on the hill, and they watched the hunters as they rode away, one of them stopping from time to time to form the driving line. Ere long, however, the furthest disappeared in the distance, and their direction was only indicated by the flying buffaloes, which, startled by their approach, galloped off. The herds on the plain toward the ravine, however, displayed no restlessness, and the newly-arriving ones also began to graze quietly among them. When it was bright day, the chief said to Walter—

“Just look through your glass toward the ravine, and

see whether there is a single buffalo in front of it—that will be our man with the framework on his head. He will be standing about there, and will not run toward the ravine till the buffaloes dash up to him when driven by us.”

Walter looked for a long time at the indicated trees which rose on the horizon, but could not perceive an isolated buffalo near them. In the meanwhile, the chief had been gazing fixedly in the same direction, with his hand over his eyes, and suddenly said—

“I think I can see him; at least there is a black dot there, and I fancy that it has drawn rather nearer to the trees. Give me your glass.”

He took the telescope from Walter’s hand, and had only looked through it for a short time, when he said—

“Of course it is our man; he is standing right in the centre of the ravine. You will now be able to recognize him too; seek him to the right of the trees.”

Walter took the glass in his turn, and had scarce looked through it ere he also saw the imitation buffalo standing between the herds and the cañon.

More and more buffaloes continually arrived right and left, and the chief kept watching the two extreme ends of the semicircle, in which his warriors were to ride up from both sides. The last of them soon appeared, like black spots, on the extreme distance. They moved towards the ravine, and the segment described by the Delawares could be overlooked from the hill. Suddenly the chief raised his shrill hunting-yell, and it was taken up by the beaters along the whole line on both sides of him. At once all

urged their horses to a gallop, and dashed toward the ravine, while the wild hunting-cries startled the buffaloes all over the plain, and they fled before the on-coming riders. The whole line of Indians followed at a killing pace the fugitive herds, which were continually packed closer together, and urged onwards by their pursuers. The nearer the Indians came to the cañon, the closer they drew their line together, and the louder and more terribly sounded their yell. Only a few of the buffaloes turned against the line, and these were killed by the bullets of the Indians. Not one of the riders, however, stayed to trouble himself about a wounded or killed bull, but all followed the herds at a headlong pace. Walter also shot several buffaloes, but still galloped on by the side of the chief, and shouted at the full pitch of his lungs.

During this period the Indian with the buffalo hide over him stood on the grassy plain some thousand paces from the ravine, and looked at the herds dashing up in the distance. They came toward him with a noise of thunder, and the earth began to shake beneath the Indian's feet. He now walked backwards and forwards, but constantly kept his eyes fixed on the foremost buffaloes, and tried to attract their attention by repeated leaps. They came toward him, and he then slowly trotted off, while continually looking round lest the savage creatures might get too near him: he gradually increased his speed, and, to his great delight, saw that the foremost herd was following him in a straight line. At this point, however, he ran at his hardest, for the terrified animals were now coming on rib against rib, in such a maddened flight, that he had

alone, disgusted and horrified him, and he was glad to leave the ravine behind him, and refresh his eyes with the pleasant scene that the fine grassy expanse with its thousand varieties of flowers offered him. The squaws had already put up scaffoldings over the fires, to smoke and dry the tongues, and they welcomed the successful hunters and received their booty with great manifestations of delight. The day was a very busy one, and during it no further attempts at hunting were made. The next morning, however, the chief invited Walter to go with him down to the stream, for its banks were covered with game of every description. Walter was soon ready ; he took up his rifle and left the camp with the chief, after the latter had requested his people not to go hunting by the river, but to choose the opposite direction. He then told Walter to go into the narrow strip of forest on the left bank, and himself waded through the shallow water to the other side, because, as he said, there was too much brushwood there, and Walter might easily lose his way in it. Before they parted, he pointed out a spot where the prairie ran into the wood close up to the stream ; Walter was to wait for him there.

Our young hero had been walking backwards and forwards for about half an hour in the wood, without catching sight of any game, when, all at once, there was a rustling and crackling in the bushes near the water, and a heavy black mass broke out of the thicket. Walter had leapt behind a tree, and now perceived a badly wounded huge buffalo, which had probably fled hither after the yesterday's chase, and had sought the water in order to cool its wounds in it. Walter fired at it ; but as the brute, for all


that, tried to crawl on, he gave it his second barrel, which killed it.

At this moment a shot was fired at no great distance on the other side of the stream, and Walter looked in the direction whence the sound came. At this moment he heard the chief's shrill cry, and clearly distinguished that he was shouting his name. In a few leaps he reached the opposite bank, and forced his way through the underwood while the chief's cry for help constantly reached him louder and more earnest. The thicket, however, was too thickly entangled with creepers for Walter to be able to advance at any speed, and the swampy ground, in which he frequently sank up to the knees, still more impeded him. At length he reached an open glade, and heard from its other side Leopard's voice issuing quite distinctly from the undergrowth.

Walter darted into it, bent the branches apart with all his might, and suddenly sprang into a clearing, when he saw the chief prostrate on the ground, and struggling with an immense panther, which was crouching on him and trying to seize his throat. Leopard was keeping the furious animal off him with his left hand, while his right arm covered with blood hung powerless on the grass. With one bound Walter threw himself on the savage brute, and thrust his long bowie-knife into its side. The panther flew round and buried its terrible claws in the shoulder of its new assailant, but Walter's knife at the second thrust reached the animal's heart, and stretched it dead on the ground. The boy now saw that the chief was lying on a second panther, whose head was cleft asunder. Leo-

pard sank with a grateful glance at his preserver into the grass and lost his senses ; but Walter quickly pulled out his handkerchief and bound up the wounds on Leopard's right arm, from which the blood still poured freely. Then he fetched water in his hat and washed his friend's temples and chest, until he once more opened his eyes. The chief pointed to his right thigh, and when Walter examined it, he found several very serious wounds on it, which the wild beast had inflicted with its hind paws. The boy was about to pull off his shirt, in order to employ it in binding up the wounds, but at this moment saw the cloth which the chief had worn round his head hanging in the bushes ; he quickly fetched it and carefully fastened it round the wounded leg. Then he again brought water in his hat to refresh his friend with, and asked him what he had better do to get him back to camp. Leopard begged him in a faint voice to load his rifle, and lay it by his side, so that in case of need he could fire it with his left hand ; for he was unable to lift his right hand. Walter carried out his wish, and when Leopard requested him to hurry back to camp, Walter loaded his own weapon, laid it by the side of the wounded man, and then ran along the road by which he had come, as quickly as his feet could carry him, back to camp. He paid no attention to the wounds on his own arm, although they pained him, and the blood had run down his sleeve.

The news of the accident which had happened to Leopard spread great alarm among the Delawares ; the most powerful among them at once joined Walter, and accompanied him to the spot where their chief was lying.





"With one bound Walter threw himself on the savage brute."—Page 320.



They found him greatly weakened by the considerable loss of blood, but quickly made a litter, on which they laid him, and raised him on their shoulders.

Leopard told one of the Delawares to take the skins off the two panthers, as well as that of a young panther which was lying at a spot he pointed out in the bush. After this the party set out and reached the camp at the expiration of an hour. The men as well as the squaws collected sorrowfully round their beloved chief; he was borne into his tent, and laid on soft skins, after which two Indian women laid herbs on his wounds, and bandaged them afresh. They also boiled an infusion of herbs for him, which they gave him to drink every now and then, and remained with him the whole of the ensuing night, in order to alleviate his pain and repeatedly change his bandages. They had also bound up Walter's wounds, who did not leave the chief's side either, and the latter often held Walter's hand in his left hand, and looked at him with a grateful glance. Toward morning Leopard sank into a deep sleep, from which he did not wake till the sun stood high in the heavens. He felt himself greatly refreshed, summoned Walter to sit by his side, and told him how he had got into such mischief on the previous day. He said that it had been his own fault, and that he deserved the pain which he had brought on himself.

While walking attentively through the forest, he suddenly noticed a panther-cub at the edge of the bushes, and fired at it unthinkingly. The brute rushed severely wounded into the thicket, and Leopard ran after it, caught it up and killed it with a blow of his tomahawk. At the

same instant, however, the two old panthers bounded on him, and he managed to cleave the head of one of them. The other, however, so lacerated his right arm, that the weapon fell out of his hand, and then the brute dashed him to the ground, and he had the greatest difficulty in keeping it off his throat.

When the chief had finished his story, he seized Walter's hand again, and said—

“You have preserved the great chief of the Delawares for his nation, you have saved your friend's life, and risked your own in doing so; for had your knife missed the panther's heart, you would have been lost. The mere claw of the brute laid on your shoulder has inflicted deep wounds, although fortunately they are not so serious as mine. Had you not liberated me from the wild beast, it would have killed me in a few minutes, for my strength was beginning to fail me. You have a great heart for friendship and gratitude, but in that respect the hearts of the Delawares are not small.”

The chief uttered the last words with a solemn accent, and significantly pressed Walter's hand.

The unimpaired constitution which an Indian possesses, caused Leopard's wounds to be soon cured, and at the end of a few weeks he was once more in possession of his full strength. The camp was again transferred to the trading post, and the buffalo tongues disposed of to the agent at a high price. The chief had not again mentioned the adventure with the panther in Walter's presence, or expressed his thanks for the boy's assistance. On the evening after the deal for the buffalo tongues, while he was

sitting alone with Walter at the fire in front of his tent, he said to him :—

"I have a long ride to make, in order to settle a matter of great importance to me ; I shall begin the journey early to-morrow. You will accompany me, for I hope that you will be able to do me a great service."

"You know, Leopard, how ready I am to oblige you, if I am able to do so," Walter replied with a joyous look.

"You will be able to help me, if you have the will, of that I am fully convinced. Only a few of my young men will accompany me, and they will bring my charger and your chestnut after us ; for we have a sharp ride before us. But you are fond of a good ride."

"So long as my strength holds out, I will remain with you, wherever we may go," Walter said with sparkling eyes, and in thought saw himself once more galloping over the boundless prairies.

"It is well, I will put you to the trial," the chief said with a smile, and turned the conversation to other subjects.

The next morning, ere the sun rose, Leopard and Walter were mounted, and four young warriors leapt into their saddles to follow their chief. Two of them led the white charger and his young friend's chestnut mustang. They left the camp amid a thousand good wishes from those remaining behind, and bent their course to the south-east. Leopard was serious and silent, for which Walter accounted by the importance of the business he had to settle. The new country, the woods in their spring beauty, the grassy meadows with their brilliant hues, the streams with their fish, and the incalculable quantity of

game, however, constantly enchaind the boy's attention, and amused his quick mind, which was so susceptible to everything that was beautiful. For four days they kept their horses at a quick pace from dawn till far into the night, and when dusk spread over the plain on the fourth evening, the chief told Walter that they must still ride for a few hours. The night was starlit, and the riders soon reached a lofty wood, along whose skirt they marched for several hours. Then they reached a deeply-trodden primeval buffalo-path, that ran into the forest. Here Leopard dismounted, and the rest followed his example, for it was impossible to ride in the darkness, owing to the lianas. The chief walked silently ahead, and only addressed his companions when any obstacle checked his progress. In half an hour they reached a river in the forest, where Leopard resolved to pass the night.

A fire was rapidly lit. The horses were tethered in the wild oats which covered the ground of the forest, and their riders refreshed themselves with a piece of venison, which they roasted at the fire, as well as with the fresh draught which the crystalline stream offered them. It seemed as if Leopard had grown more silent and serious with each day, although his affection for Walter was not in the slightest degree changed. On this evening, too, he did not talk much, but soon wished the boy good-night, pressed his hand heartily, and then lay down himself on his buffalo-hide.

It was late the next morning ere the chief rose, and even then he seemed in no hurry to continue his journey. He dallied over breakfast with evident purpose, and it

was not till the sun darted its beams through the tree-tops into their bivouac that he said to Walter—

"We two have a short but sharp ride to take to-day. You shall mount my charger, so that you may not be left behind, for it will be quick going."

Walter looked at him with amazement, for, with the exception of Leopard, he had never seen any one mounted on the white stallion, and he almost fancied that the chief had spoken in mistake.

"I ride your charger?" the boy said, in amazement.

"Yes, my white stallion, and I hope that you as rider will do him honour, and not let me catch him up; for till now no horse has succeeded in doing so."

"It shall not depend on me, and I shall fully satisfy you," Walter replied with beaming looks, for he had not hoped to have the honour of mounting the chief's charger.

The latter was now saddled instead of Rupert. Walter mounted it, Leopard leaped on his horse, and they soon passed through the stream of water, which was not deep. The wood was here clearer, so that the riders had no occasion to dismount, and could keep their horses at a rapid pace. They soon saw the prairie through the masses of foliage, and a few minutes after Leopard stopped his horse on the skirt of the forest.

"Now you must ride first, as our race will begin from here. I hope that you will not allow me to catch you up," he said to Walter, with a beaming face.

"Where are we to race to?" Walter asked, in surprise.

"Ride on, and you will soon find the direction," the

chief answered, as he drew his horse on one side, to make room for the boy to pass.

Walter rode, looking round him in amazement, out from under the last tree, took a glance at the skirt of the forest, and cried—

“ Good gracious—the fort !”

“ Off we go !” the chief shouted, and away Walter dashed on the white stallion, as if flying over the grass toward the hill on which his uncle’s block-house stood, the chief galloping after him at full speed.

Walter tried to shout, but his voice refused its service, and instead of words from his lips, tears of gratitude poured from his eyes. The chief, however, shouted the war-yell of the Delawares in his rear so loudly that it echoed through the fort, and summoned its inhabitants in alarm to the gates.

Walter saw his family stretching out their arms to him, he too spread out his arms delightedly toward them, and the chief pulled up his horse and waved his buffalo hide in the air, to remove any apprehension of hostilities. The charger flew up the hill, the Taylors dragged the beloved youth from the horse, he disappeared in their embraces, and Daniel held the charger with one hand, and thrust the other between his overjoyed friends, to his beloved young master, so that at the least he might grasp his arm. The unhopèd-for happiness, the blessedness of the meeting, overpowered them all so greatly for the moment, that they did not perceive the chief standing motionless by their side, and allowing the happiness which he had created to permeate his heart ; but when their feelings were slightly subdued,

and the eyes of the delighted family were turned toward him, he said earnestly—

“The boy has taught the man friendship and gratitude, he has been a faithful friend to the chief of the Delawares, he saved his life, and the heart of the Leopard now contains no less friendship and gratitude than the heart of the boy. The Delaware chief gives back his friend Walter to his family, he presents him with his best horse, his white war-stallion, and he grants the Black Panther liberty, so that he may never leave his friend Walter again. The Black Panther is and remains a Delaware, and any one who disturbs his peace or that of his friends, will be a deadly foe of the Delawares.”

The Indian had scarce uttered the last word, however, ere Walter threw his arms round his neck, and all the Taylors and Daniel clung round the magnanimous Indian and loudly expressed their thanks.

“My heart is now again happy and my tongue light. Leopard has in future many friends on Bear River,” the chief said, overcome by the feeling of delight with which the happiness he had created filled his breast.

He allowed his friends to lead him into the fort, where they heartily welcomed him. He spent the day here joyfully and in pleasant union, slept in the same room with Walter, and on the next morning bade farewell to his friends, with the promise to visit them twice a year.

Five years have passed since the incidents we have attempted, though feebly we fear, to describe. The fort has

disappeared, a pleasant house, overgrown with lianas, is standing in its place on the hill, and is inhabited by Taylor, his wife, and their two sons.

The farm has been extended far into the prairie on Plum Creek, and some of the fields produce maize, the others a magnificent cotton crop.

Amy has married the second son of Mr. Warwick, on Choctaw River; and Walter Arden has started his own farm on the other side of Plum Creek, which he manages in a masterly way with Daniel. The prairie in front of the two settlements is enlivened with splendid cattle. Everything in and round the farms bears testimony to the prosperity and undisturbed peace of the inhabitants, and in a large enclosure in front of Walter's house, Rupert, the chestnut, and the charger, may still be seen quietly grazing.

THE END.

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